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MODERN GERMAN MUSIC.

MODERN GERMAN MUSIC.

RECOLLECTIONS AND CRITICISMS.

BY

HENRY F. CHORLEY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO

The Memory of

DEPARTED FRIENDS,

THESE PAGES ARE

GRATEFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

THE following book must not be offered to the public without a distinct statement of the materials of which it is composed.

A portion of it appeared in "Music and Manners in France and North Germany," which was published in the year 1841. Since that work was prepared, I have again and again visited North and South Germany, always, in such visits, looking to one and the same object of interest—always endeavouring to complete my knowledge of the state of musical creation, performance, and artistic life, as they existed previous to the year of confusion, 1848.—In more senses than one, the recent European revolution marks the close of a period;—and

I have fancied that, by throwing together my earlier and my later recollections and criticisms, some small contribution might possibly be made to the history of a favourite Art during the earlier half of the present century. With this view, the chapters on the Brunswick Festival, those on Music in Berlin, Leipsic, and Dresden, which made part of my former work, have been revised with great care. Many portions of them have been altogether re-written, and large additions made:* it being inevitable that in a record which aspired (within its own conditions) at completeness, certain prominent subjects should be touched upon, certain changes noted, certain reputations discussed. But though the revision has been sedulous, and though the new matter introduced is considerable, there has been

* Let me specify among these, the pages on Spontini as a musician—the chapters on the operas of Gluck—and on the works produced by Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer for Berlin—those on Madame Schröder Devrient and Herr Wagner at Dresden—at Weimar, the pages on M. Chèlard and on Hummel—at Leipsic, the comparison betwixt Bach and Handel—and the chapter on Musical Journalism.

no modification of judgment—no restatement of original impressions. It has been my fortune (or *mis*fortune as may be) to undergo very few conversions with regard to Music and its masters. I hope that I know more than I did —but I have not come to like what I disliked ten years ago, or the reverse.

Indeed, I suspect that those who limit their labours to a consideration of musical effects, will generally find this same instinct (not to call it prompt judgment) a safer guide than many dare admit. It is impossible to know a work thoroughly on a first hearing—on a first intercourse with an artist to perceive the extent of his merits: but unless the work produce from the first a quick desire for better acquaintance—unless the artist at first displays some attribute or accomplishment that attracts—it may be only a damage done to taste, and a loss of time, on subsequent occasions to attempt to find beauty where none suggested itself—or charm in that which failed to charm originally. Such attempts, however laudable on the score

of their patience and charity, are apt to end in the listener losing his discernment of good from evil,—in his confusing what is mediocre with what is great,—in his accepting pretensions on the terms of those advancing them, not according to the standard of artistic perfection. The spirit of over-strained conciliation is as dangerous as the spirit of arrogant condemnation. When scientific analysis is the task in hand, another process is, of course, demanded. Then qualities must be weighed — then exceptions must be allowed for, which are beyond the cognizance and the province of the general listener. Then motives and technical excellencies may be estimated, with reference to their intrinsic ingenuity, and not to their immediate results. My book is not one for the scholar, but for the listener—not for the professor, so much as for the general public.

The distinction just drawn will account, too, for its form. Having confined myself to the consideration of musical effects, it was fair that my readers should form some idea of the time,

place, and society, in the midst of which such effects were made—be able to judge of the humour and temperament of the person professing to sit in judgment. I have, therefore, not altered the framework in which my former recollections and criticisms were set, but have added a few sketches of life, manners, scenery, in their natural order, to introduce the unfamiliar recollections and criticisms with some reality.—There is another apology which might be offered. I might say that I could not be totally silent concerning the happiest days and freshest enjoyments of my life, in a work which attempts to collect and exhibit their fruits; but if the matter be in itself irrelevant, discordant, or frivolous, I ought not to expect patience with what may be rejected as merely so much sentimental and superfluous egotism.

London, March 1854.

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A

NORTH GERMAN FESTIVAL.

BRUNSWICK IN 1839.

A

NORTH GERMAN FESTIVAL.

BRUNSWICK IN 1839.

CHAPTER I.

THE JOURNEY AND THE REHEARSAL.

Hamburg to Haarburg—Steam-boat groups—German good nature—Haarburg to Soltau—Bookcase at Soltau—Celle—Brunswick—Its picturesque features—The Blue Angel—The Egydien Kirche—Beethoven's Symphony in C minor—A word to our own festival committees—Diligence of the orchestra——Dr. Mendelssohn Bartholdy—Care in rehearsal.

THE most hardened of travellers must find the first half-hour of a solitary journey in a strange country a trifle dreary. If even, moreover, the banks of the Elbe betwixt Hamburg and Haarburg rivalled those of the same river above Dresden in beauty and variety, they must have looked dismal on the fourth of September 1839, after a

night's storm, which had scattered all the first yellow leaves of the linden trees on the Jungfernstieg, and under clouds hanging low, which presently discharged themselves in a dense chill rain. The deck of the steamer was made untenable by a drove of horses on their way from the Lubeck fair to Italy. The little close cabin reeked with tobacco-smoke. I had before me a day and a night's journey through this forbidding weather, across the dreariest country conceivable, with only Patience and Pantomime to stand for my purveyors and interpreters. "What a fool have I been," said I, "ever to think of this Musical Festival at Brunswick!"

But the people of North Germany have a good-natured way with them, which must put the most pertinacious feelings of strangeness and solitude to flight in a wonderfully short time. When the tobacco wreaths parted in the cabin, a group or two were revealed worth studying. One was made up of a youth and two damsels; the latter travelling through that raw atmosphere with their bare arms undefended, save by the long brown kid gloves of our great-grandmothers—good-humoured sprightly girls, blessed by Heaven with miscellaneous appetites.

Their cavalier, who was making love to one or both of them, was yet more noticeable. His gay and daintily-braided tobacco-pouch slung round his neck, his exuberant travelling cap, his waistcoat, which had been of many colours, his trowsers, shapeless enough to make a stranger inclined to doubt whether *schneider* be, indeed, a German word, his huge, square seal-ring on the least clean of forefingers — not to forget the thousand smirks and smiles and fondlings lavished on the objects of his care—composed a whole characteristic, and worthy of note, though insignificant when compared with others of his sex and age to be encountered in those days.—An interest of different quality attached itself to a party of fair and stately girls with their mother, all in deep mourning, and attended by a young gentleman, whose good French, and better manners, belonged, as might have been guessed, to a good name also.—Further, to make me feel at home, all travelling difficulties were presently brought to an end in the best of all possible fashions, by my happy fortune in lighting upon an excellent and sociable Strasburgher, who wished to avoid the then slow and circuitous route of the public conveyance by Lunenburg, and who, being bound for

Hanover, proposed that we should join company in a *wagon*, and post together as far as Celle, within two or three stages of Brunswick.

The day kept the promise of the morning, and the gray spongy sky, and the incessant rain, made the damp and barren moors between Haarburg and Celle appear doubly desolate. The very heather on them looks starved and wretched; the trees crouch as if they had hardly the heart to grow. The few people to be seen seemed uncouth and squalid. We were detained early in the last stage before reaching Soltau by the loss of a horse's shoe; and, while we were waiting for the return of the postillion, who had gone back to the post-house, forth issued from a miserable sod-hut by the wayside, a couple of girls, hooting and screaming,—as unkempt, as dirty, as haggard, as were ever two savages; the long loops of black riband which hung from the country caps they wore streaming wildly in the wind.—Evening was closing in when we reached Soltau. Here that domestic curse, "a great wash" of an enormous stock of linen, busily directed by the daisy-faced landlady, was filling the post-house with soapy steam—no pleasant atmosphere to breathe

on such an afternoon. To crown all, the *Maritornes* in attendance, an ill-grown, slip-shod girl, was entirely driven to her wits' end by the arrival of the young Count and the ladies who had been on the boat that morning. While she clattered to and fro, retarding, instead of preparing, dinner, I was struck by a neat satin-wood bookcase at the end of the room; and on examination, found it to contain a handsomely-bound collection, of the best German classics—Göthe, Schiller, Herder, Jean Paul, Novalis, and even Schelling; and the works of Byron, Shakspeare and Irving, in the original English. Coarse prints, too, of the three Georges of England and Queen Charlotte were hanging on the walls; with one or two such large engravings of the death of Nelson, and of the encounters between the British and the French fleets, as still ornament the guest-chambers of our country houses. But a cookery book would have been more to the purpose than these refinements. When, at last, dinner made its appearance, the soup might have been furnished by the wash-tub, and the *piece de resistance* proved to be a block of pork, terribly salted, and liberally larded, with preserved cherries to help it down—a dish defying

even appetites which had been quickened by that penurious thing, a German inn breakfast, and a long raw morning spent on the wastes of Hanover.

It was not till long after midnight that we rattled into Celle, the head-quarters (so the guide-books say) of the pure German language. The town was dead asleep. Not a solitary roamer was in the streets; not a solitary taper winked from a high window. But there is an air of formal and faded stateliness in the streets of Celle, and in the large lofty chambers and wide staircase of the hotel, which we at last succeeded in forcing open, that called up visions of phlegmatic Electors and stiff Electresses on their progresses and parades, such as may be found painted in Dr. Moore's travels. After extorting a cup of coffee from the blinking waiter, though sorry to shake hands and part from my Strasburg friend, I was glad to be shut up again in my *wagon*, and to be dozing and jolting my way towards Brunswick. Thanks to the excellent posting regulations adopted throughout the whole of North Germany, a child of five years old, who knew not a word of the language, might, in 1839, have

crossed the country from Hamburg to Cologne with small risk of being cheated, and with the certainty of not being delayed.

We reached Brunswick by half-past eight in the morning. A brighter, more encouraging day never dawned. The sun glittered on the spotlessly bright window-panes of that ancient comfortable town, which was already astir with preparations for the Festival. My travelling friend had recommended me to take up my quarters at the "Blue Angel;" and thither I drove accordingly. There are larger hotels in the town—there can be none in any town more civilly kept. While I was alighting, the waiter apologized for the absence of the landlord, who was gone to the rehearsal of "Paulus;" and while he set on the table capital coffee, bread, and eggs, for breakfast, made me good-naturedly *au fait* in all the politics of the "Musik-Feste." By the time that my pen and ink were unpacked, I felt as if I had been in Brunswick a week at the very least. I do not add in a grumbling spirit, that it required North German heartiness to make up for the discomforts of North German lodgment, — to compensate for the box, by way of bed, in which the victim was expected

to sleep,—for the ball of feathers, which *would not* cover him, in lieu of sheets, blankets, and counterpane,—for the noisy uncarpeted floor, and the grievously scanty provision of water in his pie-dish and phial—not basin and jug—but truth is truth.

A walk after breakfast increased my admiration for the cleanliness and quaintly picturesque architecture of Brunswick. To be sure, one's first old town in Germany is much like the first figure one eyes when first setting foot on Calais pier, who looks inviting and pleasant, be she even a *poissarde*, coarse, and old, and wrinkled. But, inexperience and charity apart, there are beautiful things in Brunswick: among others, its richly decorated *Rathhaus*, with those corrupt ornaments and that heavy pyramidal gable, that seem to be proper to buildings of its order: a few cloister-like arches of the richest Gothic, in the opposite corner of the place where it stands; and close to the Cathedral a bronze lion of Byzantine antiquity. The human beings, too, who looked out at the shop doors, or streamed along the streets, in *such* equipages! were singularly comely and prosperous-looking. A few hours' further experience convinced me

of their civility and hospitality. In all that concerned the official arrangements of the Festival, in a desire to accomodate all classes, from The Duke down to his meanest subject, and in patient attention to the comfort of the most obscure stranger, I must insist that the gentlemen of the committee were a model, which might with advantage be imitated at our own provincial entertainments of a similar kind; where a shred of white ribbon at the button-hole, and a wand in the hand, were too often signs that the wearer fancied himself licensed to be discourteous, neglectful, and overbearing.

I was lying in the sunshine, after the one o'clock *table d'hôte*, feverish and sleepy, lazily calling up past festivals and distant faces, when the thread of my musings was cut short by the entrance of a clean civil little boy, with a message from Dr. Mendelssohn, who was then in the Egydien Kirche, superintending the rehearsal. We were there ere I was well awake. The church is but the fragment of a large Gothic building, which has been sorely despoiled of much of its old ornaments by time or violence; and its one good point, height, renders it ineligible for musical purposes. Even then,

though it was late in the afternoon, and the rehearsal had been going on with small intermission since the morning, it was three parts full. I arrived in the midst of Beethoven's C minor Symphony, just a few bars before the commencement of its glorious final march. Had I desired a moment of the strongest possible sensation on first making acquaintance with a German orchestra, it could not have been more completely granted.

The performance fell far short of what it would have been by Dr. Mendelssohn's own band at Leipsic. At these German musical festivals, as was formerly the case at our English ones, the orchestra is compounded of unequal materials, being assisted by many persons unused to practise together. Here, too, it was largely amateur. But the effect of the music nevertheless was overcoming. The glory of the Symphony was heightened by the lofty arches and long-drawn aisles through which it resounded; and when the thrill and the mustering of blood to the heart, which so few things excite when early youth is passed, had subsided, I could not but wistfully ask myself, why such noble works are not also selected to form a part of the morning per-

formances at our Musical Festivals, instead of being there thrust into the schemes of Concerts five hours long, when all the provincial world is waiting to hear the newest Italian airs and cadences from the *prima donna* of the hour.

This proposal to introduce great orchestral music into sacred performances is worth examining. There are works by all the great masters, so decidedly secular in tone, as to jar unpleasantly upon the mind on such occasions. Perhaps the only three of Beethoven's Symphonies eligible would be the one mentioned, the *Eroica*, with its grave and holy "Funeral March," and the Choral Symphony. Beethoven's other Symphonies, besides being too secular in character, are too delicate in detail, to bear being rendered by a very large orchestra, in which, to balance the stringed instruments, the wind-instruments would have to be doubled. That the master, in composing, had an eye to such gradation, may be clearly seen, on comparing, for instance, his overture to "Leonora," with that in C major, Op. 124, the "Fest. Overture," which, being apparently written for an enormous band, was, till lately, all but unknown in England. As regards the profanity of mere instrumental

music, as opposed to the sanctity of the "Messiah," or of Spohr's "Last Judgment," let no one deceive himself. Our Musical Festivals are not direct acts of devotion because they are performances of holy words set to befitting music, and are often held in churches. There are few that defend them on such grounds who would not recoil from the notion that they are worshipping, when they sit in silence before the *Madonna di San Sisto* of the Dresden Gallery, or when they enter the stately cathedral at Antwerp to admire the great pictures Rubens has left there. And yet the two acts are precisely identical in character. It is not the mere adoption of the text of Scripture by the musician — it is not the selection of Saints and Angels by the painter — that make works of art operate with a hallowing influence upon our vexed and worldly spirits. It is that the high thoughts which the artist has brought to his task awaken in us those better and more spiritual aspirings, which are too often stifled in the heavy sleep of self-indulgence, or the harsh tumult of money-getting, or the dissipating frivolity of society.

In its performance of Beethoven's Symphony, the orchestra was hardly as exact as it might

have been. But the earnestness and anxiety of its members, who betook themselves to their tasks—one heedless if he see-sawed over his violoncello as oddly as Dr. Johnson—another, if he rasped the very hair off his head—a third, if, like the bassoon player in "Bracebridge Hall," he "blew his face to a point,"—made a sight at once new and, though amusing, calculated to disarm ridicule. Indeed, that sense of the whimsical and grotesque, which is so invaluable as a travelling companion to solitary persons, of necessity becomes far less sardonic in Germany than elsewhere. Every eye was fixed fast upon the Conductor, with a submissiveness and an admiration which must have had their reciprocal effect in inspiring him to go through his fatiguing duties without flagging or impatience: and Dr. Mendelssohn's conducting at rehearsal, though easy in appearance, and, therefore, any thing but distracting to the eye, was the strictest in spirit of any that I had then witnessed.

After the Symphony, a weak and tame *contralto* singer, with a profusion of fair ringlets, went through the delicious *arioso* in "St. Paul," "But the Lord is mindful of his own":

and then the Conductor, hitherto a personal stranger, came down to me, and gave me a friendly welcome to Germany.

It is sad now to recall the inquiries after mutual friends, the quick interchange of a musical piece of news or two, and the unexpected joke (for a joke there was, I remember), amongst which began an acquaintance soon to be ripened into indulgent friendship on the one side, and faithful regard on the other. There was this inexpressible comfort in all intercourse with Mendelssohn, that he made no secret of his likings and dislikings. Few men so distinguished have been so simple, so cordial, so considerate; but few have been so innocent of courtiership, positive or negative. One might be sure that a welcome from him was a welcome indeed.

I thought then, as I do now, his face one of the most beautiful which has ever been seen. No portrait extant does it justice. A Titian would have generalized, and, out of its many expressions, made up one which, in some sort, should reflect the many characteristics and humours of the Poet—his earnest seriousness—his child-like truthfulness—his clear, cultivated intellect—his impulsive vivacity. The German painters

could only invest a theatrical, thoughtful-looking man with that serious cloak which plays so important a part on the stage, and in the portraits of their country; and conceive the task accomplished, when it was not so much as begun. None of them has perpetuated the face with which Mendelssohn listened to the music in which he delighted, or the face with which he would crave to be told again some merry story, though he knew it already by heart. I felt in that first half-hour, that in him there was no stilted sentiment — no affected heartiness; that he was no sayer of deep things, no searcher for witty ones; but one of a pure, sincere intelligence — bright, eager, and happy, even when most imaginative.—Perhaps there was no contemporary at once strong, simple, and subtle enough, to paint such a man with such a countenance.

The rehearsal proceeded.—A psalm by Schneider was gone through, the "Hallelujah chorus" from the Messiah, and Weber's "Jubilee Overture:"—all practised with care and intelligence, not rattled over as a task. The painful conviction, that nine-tenths of the orchestra feels itself employed in manufacturing music, which is so constantly forced upon the listener at English

rehearsals, could never be entertained here for one single moment.

The audience remained attentive and numerous till the last chord, and then dispersed in happy anticipation of the morrow; Dr. Mendelssohn, to be serenaded by the young men of the town with some of the part-songs, which make up so peculiar a feature in German vocal music.

CHAPTER II.

FIRST DAY.

THE ORATORIO—THE DINNER.

Early hours in Brunswick—Primitive equipages—A retrospect of a Dublin festival with Paganini—Contrasts in costume, with a note upon costumes at home—Honours to Dr. Mendelssohn —The popularity of "St. Paul" compared with that of Spohr's "Last Judgment"—Its freedom from manner—Its dramatic effects—Its four great songs—The performance compared with English performances—The singers—Madame Fischer-Achten—Herr Fischer—Herr Schmetzer—The reception of "St. Paul"—German and English modesty—The dinner—The decorations—Impudent Englishman—The cookery—The musical honours—„Dankes-Gruß"—A straightforward dialogue—The climax and close of the feast.

By six o'clock A.M. on the first morning of the Festival, there was no possibility of sleeping in Brunswick. Not only was the entire "Blue Angel" stirring and clamorous for its breakfast —the whole town was blithely alive. In every

room of the opposite four-story house, which seemed nodding into my little light chamber, the work of adorning was busily going on:—in one window, the first flourish of the razor; in another, the last shoulder-knot pinned on, or the sash tied. But neither gentlemen nor ladies denied themselves the pleasure of throwing wide the casements, and leaning out into the fresh autumnal sunshine, so often as the frequent sound of creaking springs and jingling wheels, the leisurely trot of horses, or the eager bawling of their drivers, announced that another cargo of pleasurers was coming in to enjoy the execution of Mendelssohn's "St. Paul."

The equipages were things to admire. The old Irish postchaise, out of which, upon its being rolled from the coach-house, three hens flew, leaving an egg behind them, would have figured as a vehicle of worship among some of the machines which deposited their full freight beneath my windows. German *wagons*, of an older date than the Electors and Electresses whom I did *not* see at Celle; horses reminding one of Mrs. Butler's picture of the Pennsylvanian charger, more "like an old hair trunk" worn bare, than a creature to mount or to drive; harness cracked

with neglect, and brown with age; Jehus in cockades, top-boots, laced hats, livery coats, earrings, and heterogeneously coloured cotton handkerchiefs, stuck on as each individual wearer judged best,—I shall never forget the scene, so primitive, so bustling, so cheerful. A temporary lull took place between seven and eight, when the world might be supposed to be at breakfast. By nine, every one was streaming towards the Egydien Kirche, which, even at that hour, was three parts full.

I have assisted at many provincial Musical Festivals at home. In particular, I remember, as curious and characteristic, the Dublin meeting held in the year 1831. At this the morning performances took place in the artificially-lighted theatre, the boxes of which were filled with a remarkable display of beauty, while the galleries overflowed with a dirty, half-clad audience, which, after its peculiar fashion, made no scruple of cracking jokes at the performers as they presented themselves. Who that was present can forget its shrieks of delight when Paganini glided from the cloak, which, like a cloud, enveloped him at the side scenes, to play his *Rondo colla campanella* between the acts of the

concert? and how, for a more distinct view of his wizard figure, the people compelled him to mount the pianoforte—a proceeding so much to their tastes, that on Braham coming next to sing "The Bay of Biscay," the "gods" insisted upon his doing the same, and all but exacted a similar compliance from gentle Madame Stockhausen in her turn? That was a scene as lively, as full of contrast as the English heart can desire; yet more gaily various as a sight was the audience in the Egydien Kirche at Brunswick. Elegantly dressed girls in the transparent and gay toilettes of an English ball-room, might be seen, sitting side by side with the gipsy-coloured, hard-handed peasant women of the district, in their black caps gracefully displaying the head and picturesquely decorated with pendant streamers of ribbon. Here, again, was a comely youth, tight-laced in his neat uniform, and every hair of his moustache trimmed and trained to an agony of perfection, squeezed up against a dirty, savage, half-naked student, with his long, wild hair half way down his back, and his velveteen coat, confined at the waist with one solitary button, letting it be clearly seen that neither waistcoat nor shirt was underneath. The or-

chestra, on the other hand, had an effective appearance of uniformity. The lady-singers, though all serving gratuitously, both amateurs and theatrical artists, had wisely agreed to merge all individual fancies in an inexpensive, but delicate and pretty uniform of white, with a large nosegay by way of ornament.* The whole assembly of orchestra and audience, thus heterogeneously composed, was cemented by one sympathetic desire to honour a great musician; and this was as strongly, if not as vivaciously expressed, as in the curiosity to have out "the man who played on the one string" testified by the boys and girls of the Dublin gallery. All eyes waited Mendelssohn's—not The Duke's—coming. His conductor's desk was wreathed with a fresh gar-

* Our sturdy national disposition to resist the slightest control in matters of taste used to tell oddly, on occasions like these, in this same matter of costume. I remember, at the last rehearsal of "Acis and Galatea," given by one of our provincial choral societies some twenty years ago, overhearing one young lady of the choir, while discussing the delicate matter of her *coiffure*, say to her neighbour, "Ringlets is out; I shall go Fanny Kemble-wise." When the evening arrived, the *Galatea*, who was terribly thin, and spectacled—aged fifty or thereabouts—presented herself in a triumphant scarlet hat; only one among a group of figures similarly ridiculous, whose ill-considered and not-to-be-overruled tawdriness turned a really fine performance into a broad farce.

land of flowers. Upon it, beside the score of his Oratorio, was laid another more delicate *bouquet* ready for his use, and, if I mistake not, for his refreshment, a paper cornucopia of those dainties in which every good German housewife is so skilful. We should laugh at these *petits soins* in London. At Brunswick they were pretty, because hearty and natural.

Precisely at ten o'clock the performance began. I had heard the oratorio of "St. Paul" two or three times before, but had never thoroughly enjoyed it till then. There was much, of course, in time, place, and sympathy. What caviller against German crudity and mysticism could have resisted the "Euryanthe," conducted by Weber at Vienna?—and I should feel small patience with the most conscientious and intellectual contemner of Italian meretriciousness who at Venice could remain cold to the "Semiramide" of Rossini, performed under the auspices of *Il Maestro* himself! But, allowing for these influences as largely as may be required, there is little modern music which gains so much with every subsequent hearing as that of the "St. Paul." How forcible in their simple truth are its effects! How thrillingly expressed by the multiplication

of treble voices and wind instruments, is the celestial apparition in the scene of Saul's conversion! How ferociously real are the cries of the multitude at the stoning of St. Stephen! How melodious, in its sweet holiness of consolation, is the funeral chorus, "O happy and blest are they," when the proto-martyr is laid in his grave! There is a little design in *chiaro-scuro*, by Martin, of the burial of Sarah in the cave of Macpelah—the deep shadows and struggling lights of which, around the group of mourners bending reverentially over the dust of the departed, never fail to come back to me upon the deliciously undulating accompaniment, and the grave but soothing chant of the voices of that chorus. Nor less dramatically has the composer thrown himself into the hymn of adoration given to the heathen, when, astounded by the miraculous powers of the Apostles, "they called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercurius; and the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people." The frieze of some Grecian temple, with its choral dancers, and its flower-decked altar, is not further in character from some "Pieta," or

martyrdom of Christian art, than the delicious strain, "O be gracious, ye immortals," from the funeral anthem just mentioned, or from that serenely exulting strain of hope, "How lovely are the messengers!"

In adverting to some of the claims of "St. Paul" on the future, the scope it gives to the principal singers must not be forgotten. Though it affords less opportunity for separate display than most of Handel's oratorios, it still contains a song of the very highest order, for each voice of the vocal quartett—for the *soprano*, the air "Jerusalem;" for the *contralto*, that delicious *arioso*, "But the Lord is mindful of his own;" for the *basso*, the scene, "O God, have mercy upon me;" and for the tenor the *cantabile*, "Be thou faithful unto death!" than which Handel himself has hardly left us a tenor air deeper or more earnest in its expressiveness. Every song, moreover, is not only tempting to declaim, but agreeable to sing. From the date of the composition of this oratorio till the last hour of his life, Mendelssohn was increasingly anxious to produce effect by the ease, beauty, and practicability of his vocal writing. The above four songs were the work of happy hours; and their

success may have contributed to that mellowing of his style, and simplification of his manner, which may be traced through the works of his short life.—But this is anticipating.

In some respects the performance of "St. Paul" must have satisfied its author. The chorus was extremely good, clear in the delivery of its tone, and its precision to be inferred from the tremendous sibilation on certain words—to an amount of *ssssss-sforzando*, rarely, in 1839, to be remarked at home, even in the performance of the choruses, "For unto *us* a child is born," or, "From the cen*s*er,"—both favourites with English chorus-singers, both full of the dangerous sound. It was a great relief to be delivered from male counter-tenors, the quartett gaining by the substitution of *contralti*, which indeed are stronger upon the characteristic notes—the deepest—of their part, while the highest are attained without that nasality and effort which all men (Rubini perhaps excepted) must use, when in *falsetto* approaching the *soprano* register. On the other hand, the absence of an organ to support and blend the voices, was as great a loss as the substitution just praised was a gain. In the fugue at the opening of the second part, and in

most of the choruses, this was sadly felt. It is one of the few English indispensables which the Germans would do well to naturalize, and for the want of which, in grand sacred music, not even the superiority of their orchestras, nor the heartiness of zeal, such as characterized every chord of the Brunswick chorus, can altogether satisfactorily compensate.

The *solo* exhibitions were, as usual, the least admirable part of the performance. Yet in these, too, might be praised a steadiness and a self-sacrifice eminently commendable to English imitation. No drawling of the time was there—no neglect in speaking the text—no long-drawn displays of a single note esteemed particularly exquisite in its height or depth — no cadences or trills whatsover. Indeed, my ear sometimes missed the shake, which, judiciously applied, gives a grace without frivolity to all sacred music. On the other hand, the singers, if more correct, were harder and less finished, than ours. Madame Fischer-Achten, with her clear and satisfactory *soprano* voice, was cold and unfeeling. The principal *contralto* was weak and tame,* making

* The utter absence of good *contralto* voices in Germany had not been forced upon me by experience in 1839; but the fact may

nothing whatsoever of her song. Still drier and less expressive was Herr Fischer, the bass singer of the Oratorio. I was defending his artistic simplicity and exactness to Mendelssohn, who answered—"Yes, but I would willingly compound with any of your English flourishes, if he would but give the song as much feeling and elevation as Phillips!" What could be urged in reply? If the taste of the German public had, towards 1839, unduly taken the direction of "Italian sing-song" (to adopt Herr Von Raumer's contemptuous appellation), one cause might be, the want among German artists of southern vocal cultivation, as well as the predilection for southern *roulades* and *cantilenas*. Even Herr Schmetzer, the tenor, the best of the Brunswick party, and whose fine voice was shown to great advantage by the music, was coarse and unfinished in comparison with more than one of our own tenors, Braham being put out of the question. Yet I was

be stated without much fear of contradiction, or a single distinguished exception to the rule being named. Indeed, the almost universal avoidance of the voice as a *solo* by every composer earlier than Mendelssohn may be cited in confirmation of my assertion. The best specimens are *mezzo-soprani*, forced downward;—becoming cavernous, weak, and husky, below C sharp, and in general quality wanting richness and resonance.—1852.

told, by Mendelssohn that the great songs of the "St. Paul" had not hitherto been better executed in Germany.

I was a little disappointed with the audience. Though noiselessly attentive, it was not quite so warm as one might have fancied a German audience should be. Applause, of course, there was none; but neither was there ever that deep and universal murmur, as of the wind sweeping a corn-field, which may be heard at our Oratorios in England, when any passage of peculiar beauty has stirred the whole multitude. The Duke, for whom an arm-chair at the top of the chancel steps had been arranged throne-wise, came and went without exciting any sensation. Between the first and second acts the ladies and gentlemen were far too busy, interchanging smiles and civilities, and partaking of the thousand good things with which every one had come prepared, to have eyes or attentions for any one;—and, having followed Mendelssohn out of the orchestra with an eager eye of respect, they began to stay their appetites as zealously as if one o'clock had not been the usual dinner hour, and three the time appointed for the state banquet to be held that day in honour of the composer.

The dispersion of the audience, when all was over, was as amusing as its gathering had been. My countrywomen are heroines in crowds when compared with the blooming, fearful-looking damsels of North Germany; who, again, are more willing to be openly tended and comforted by their cavaliers, than with us would be thought maidenly. Some of the elder folks were still more precious. I watched one capital ancient couple, eminent for their ponderosity, as, face to face and hand-in-hand—the lady cleaving her track through the crowd by a steady pressure rear-foremost—they squeezed their way along, smiling as languishingly on each other as if they had been a pair of lovers.—Without the church the scene was very gay. The same wonderful equipages as I had seen in the morning, were here, there, and everywhere, departing, packed full of the songstresses and the female part of the audience, bareheaded, smiling, yet, in spite of such a liberal display, as free from coquetry as from awkwardness.

The great object of attraction was now The Dinner—how to get a good place to eat, to see, and to hear; and all the prudent hastened at once from the church to the Vauxhall saloon with this object. After a few ineffectual attempts to gain entrance at the great door, the scullery was charged by the anxious multitude; and we made our way in—gentlemen and ladies equally eager—through a legion of astonished cooks, who were busy over troughs so plentifully heaped with coarse vegetables as to threaten rather than promise for the future. The hall was arranged with three rows of long tables—the centre seats of the centre one being destined for the principal guest and the committee. A long range of windows displayed Dr. Mendelssohn's name in transparent letters. His portrait was suspended in the midst of a bower of evergreens; and the room was hung with garlands, in which, besides autumn flowers, there were so many strong-smelling herbs, that a country apothecary's laboratory has hardly a more medicinal atmosphere. Taste is not the same thing in Brunswick as in Dresden; and the hall would have been better for some of the notable old garland-weavers who used to ply

their trade before Tieck's door, in the Altmarkt of the Saxon capital, making up wreaths and chaplets of a richness and elegance which would bring a fortune in Covent Garden. By three o'clock, candles and chandeliers were lighted; and when I returned to take my seat, the principal places were occupied by gentlemen and ladies in full dress,—the latter looking none the less strange for the mixture of autumn sunlight and artificial glare by which their cheerful faces and gay clothes were displayed.

My lot cast me into a small ante-room, commanding the whole hall, and eligible, therefore, for a looker-on. Other circumstances in my position were less agreeable. I was too near one of my countrymen; and, having already received much civility from entire strangers on whom I had no claim whatsoever, it was intolerable to be attacked by him with a coarse and personal remark upon the ladies of the party close opposite to us at table. How the young travelling Englishman is endured in Germany, I often wondered; and as often was humbled by receiving heart-warm kindness and hospitality, when I remembered how little it is felt, if even not grossly recompensed, by many of my

age and condition calling themselves gentlemen! It was necessary, openly and aloud, to put an entire stop to my neighbour's communications; but, till the end of the dinner, the man never ceased wrangling with the waiters, abusing the food set before him, and imprudently thrusting himself upon those he had commented on, with a noisy audacity which one would have been ashamed to encounter in the travellers' room of a second-rate English inn, after the third round of brandy-and-water.

Truth to say, the viands were detestable, and as badly served as at our most parsimonious charity-dinner. Even *Mr. Dulcimer's* politeness could have found nothing to praise in the messes of stale veal with *haricots* as dry as acorns, and of greasy purple cabbage garnished with fat bacon, which those ample troughs had yielded! Three mortal hours were the dishes in procession. At the end of the third course the composer's health was drunk with musical honours —the first of many such jovial transactions— and there was time enough between the *entrées* for gentlemen to go and pay visits to their friends; while those who kept their seats did all but break their glasses with their knives, in the

energy of their impatient summonses to the weary, perspiring waiters, who toiled here and there—saluted by a fresh volley of objurgation at every new dainty exhibited. The principal musical illustration of the feast was cunningly presented between a black unwholesome *bouilli*, which, from its appearance, might have been any strange flesh whatsoever, and Falstaff's favourite dish, "a mess of stewed prawns," rejected unanimously by every nose in company. This was a complimentary *piece d'occasion* in three verses.

Dankes-Gruß
dem
Herrn
Dr. Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy.

The applause with which it was received was ear-splitting, and the music was as good as such music is generally.—Like my neighbours, I had left my seat, and approached as near the central table as was possible, to hear this laudatory effusion; when I found myself stopped and accosted, by a good-natured-looking middle-aged soul, in a black velveteen coat, who, *sans* ceremony, asked me "if I would tell him where I came from"; then, what my name was; and next,

what was my age! There was nothing for it but, in reply, to inquire if he wished to see my passport. "No!" was his answer, with a very hearty laugh, in which the bystanders joined; our dialogue being carried on in a most edifying mixture of tongues. Then he asked me whether I did not know Dr. Mendelssohn — whether (making signs the while, as if he had a pen in his hand) I was not "a *litteraire*." . . . . I thought all this sufficiently familiar, but least troublesomely despatched by a "Yes," on which he warmly shook hands with me, and went away. I afterwards saw this gentleman often, and heard his name. He never addressed me again. Every one seemed to know him; but no one could or would tell me his calling; so that whether it was a piece of Brunswick good-nature, Brunswick impudence, Brunswick journalism, or Brunswick police (I was helped to all these solutions by my German friends), I know not to this day.

By degrees the hubbub became unbearable. One table-song succeeded another; and there were some little bands of singers, not engaged for the occasion, who, like Goldsmith's gentlemen at the "Free and Easy," were willing to

make their voices heard, even in singing to a plate trundling on its edges, rather than keep still; and who kept breaking out, in four parts, in their own corners, in valiant contempt of the general harmony. Champagne bottles exploded so rapidly as to make a continuous *feu de joie.* Cigars were lighted by the score, and cries for "*eis*" (ice) resounded fast and furiously. How the guest, in honour of whom all this conviviality had been prepared, kept his hearing, I cannot tell,—when, as a climax, Schmetzer, the tenor, no light weight, was lifted upon the shoulders of some of the young fellows, and borne round the room with roars of Bacchanal triumph. For myself, long ere this mirthful consummation was reached, I was glad to exchange the atmosphere, which might have been helped with a spoon, for the glowing and calm freshness of a September evening.

CHAPTER III.

SECOND DAY.

THE ORATORIO—THE BALL.

Length of English and German entertainments—Bach and Mendelssohn—The Cathedral—Organ-playing—Honours to Mendelssohn—The German chorus-singer in London—The post-boy at Cologne—The Prussian Corporal—The Oratorio—False taste in the *programme*—German performance of Handel—The ball—A glance at a wake at Marksuhl—More honours to Mendelssohn—His coronation in the theatre—The ball.

In nothing is the difference between home and foreign arrangements more striking than in the quantity of entertainment deemed fashionable and sufficient. Talk of the English as lukewarm in the matter of public amusements! Where else shall we find audiences willing to be shut up in the strait seats of a theatre, or the cramping benches of an opera pit, from seven o'clock in

the evening till an hour past midnight? Where else, frames robust enough to endure, as at our provincial festivals, four hours of oratorio in the morning, and five hours of concert in the evening, with all the intermediate hurries and cares attendant on the pleasure?

I was sitting on the second morning revolving our incessant habits in my mind, and rejoicing in the rationality of a few hours' pause, when Dr. Mendelssohn kindly paid me a visit. There were some MSS. of Sebastian Bach to be inspected; there was to be organ-playing in the Cathedral: in short, it was to be one of those mornings of musical lounging and luxury, which, as regards real enjoyment of, and insight into, the art, are sometimes worth a score of formal performances. Once again the friendly hospitality must be dwelt upon which included in these choice pleasures a total stranger, without his being allowed for a single instant, to feel himself tolerated or *de trop*. If mine be a right impression of Brunswick, indeed, a more cheerful or agreeable residence could hardly be found in Germany, for any one willing to exchange the finer intellectual cultivation of other cities for the genial old-world usages which Fashion has not

laughed nor prosperity hardened out of the inhabitants of the place.

The Bach manuscripts did not turn out anything very extraordinary. It was interesting to hear Mendelssohn pronouncing on their authenticity with the certainty of a Beckford, when examining a Cellini carving or jewel; though for such a thorough-going intimacy one might have been prepared by the spirit which runs through the younger composer's harmonies, especially in his later works, and by the circumstance of his being one of the finest organ-players of his time.

The interior of the Cathedral in Brunswick is striking—striking from its antiquity, and the air of bleak, naked cheerlessness which, if the unpleasant truth be told, hardly ever fails to follow the steps of Lutheranism, when possessing itself of a Catholic building. Besides the relics which date back to the crusading days of Henry the Lion, and his statue; and besides the ivory horn and pipe of St. Blaize, the patron of the town; and besides the coffin of the hero who fell at Waterloo at the head of his black Brunswickers;—besides these objects of interest in the vaults, I say, the upper church has its curiosities, fine effigies, a quaint old seven-branched

candlestick on the altar, obviously Byzantine in date, and to be accepted readily as an authentic copy of the candlestick in the Temple of Jerusalem, by all who are not disposed to wrangle with Tradition. The organ-case, too, though dolefully worm-eaten and spoiled with white paint, is a fine piece of carving, of course a trifle less antique. The instrument was sadly out of order; but Mendelssohn made it speak most gloriously, winding up nearly an hour's magnificent playing by one of Bach's grand fugues. But the thing that comes the most vividly before me, in recalling that morning, is the expression of love and dutiful reverence on the faces of half a dozen urchins, who awaited the composer, cap in hand, at the foot of the gallery stairs. Nothing analogous to it is to be found in English admiration or French enthusiasm. It is pleasing to think that age does not necessarily destroy that look: one evidence of those feelings whereby man is made so much the worthier. Old faces are to be seen shining out in the obscure corners of German orchestras, even over such subordinate instruments as the drum, or the least wanted wind-instrument, on which the same homely but hearty attachment to their art and their occupa-

tion, and the same respect for any distinguished talent whom chance has sent among them, is to be as openly read as when their owners were fifteen. It was curious and interesting to catch a glimpse of like admiration which I once caught behind the scenes of a German opera in London, on an evening when chance brought a handful of distinguished instrumentalists just at the moment when the final chorus of "Der Freischutz" was sung. The bass or tenor at the end of the semi-circle was a huge coarse man, with *würst* and *sauer kraut* in every line of his face, and every square inch of his body; but when the names of —— and —— were pronounced, how his face lit up as he passed them on to his neighbour! The illumination lasted only a moment, but in it lay the secret of the success of the German chorus.

This interest in Music and Drama meets one in Germany under every variety of impersonation. I shall always connect the interesting approach from Aix to Cologne—the blue Siebengebirge rising like a cloud on the horizon to warn the pilgrim that he is approaching Father Rhine—with the honest good-humoured fellow who served as postilion when I last posted that

road in October 1840. A good-natured, frank, intelligent fellow he was—pointing out every object on the way; amongst other notable things, a carriage encountered not long before our coming in sight of the Byzantine peaks of St. Geryon's and the Apostles' churches. This, he said, contained the theatrical company; "and," he added, "I take great interest in them."—"Why so?" was the natural question. "Oh! I act myself; and I act very well."—"And what is it you act?"—It appeared that our friend was what in technical language is termed a supernumerary. "And did you ever wear a Roman dress?" asked ——. "No," was his answer, "but very often armour; and they generally make a herald of me, because I can blow the horn."

The very same evening, while ascending the Rhine, we stumbled upon a lover of art in one of yet sterner vocation. This was a magnificent-looking Prussian corporal, six feet high, and stalwart in proportion; his face ruddy with exposure to the weather, and its deep crimson setting off in vivid contrast the pale hair and moustaches with which it was plentifully garnished. He was a true military character, erect

and sententious—one who knew the world. He was bound from Cologne to a duck-supper at the *Kirmesse* of Bonn, where he was stationed, and was taking all a soldier's tender care (the race is good to children) of a little girl, as pretty a creature as I ever saw, whom a seat in Mendelssohn's britschka, and a handful of dried plums, exalted into a queen in her own estimation. Twenty years ago this brave fellow had taught one of our party the art of swimming; and after the honest and joyful recognition of master and pupil, who had never met in the interim, the Corporal began to tell all that he had since seen and heard. Nor was this the common soldier's story. He was a man of trust and function, and had been one of those entrusted with the delicate service of arresting the Archbishop of Cologne. The prelate, he said, when aware of his entrance and his errand, had simply said, "Do you smoke? I see you do; so do I. We shall not quarrel on our journey." On one of our party addressing the other by his name—"What!" he exclaimed, "the great pianist? I am glad to have seen him." And then it came out that the Corporal had his own taste in music, and he favoured us with his judgment upon "Il

Barbiere," which he had heard at Cologne the evening before, and did not much approve. "I have always read the papers carefully," said he, "to see what is good; so that by this time I think I ought to know something about the matter." The Corporal's connoisseurship and the postboy's dramatic skill and horn-playing might make up a very small amount of artistic qualification; but it is of the aggregate of such things that a nation's taste is composed.

Brunswick dined in the interval between the organ-playing and the commencement, at two o'clock, of the second morning's performance in the church. This last would hardly be accepted as sacred, according to the English acceptation of the word; for the *programme* ran thus:—

FIRST PART.

"Jubilee Overture" - - - -	*Weber.*
Adagio (violin), Herr Muller - -	*Spohr.*
Psalm - - - - - - -	*Schneider.*

SECOND PART.

Concerto (clarionet), Herr Tretbar -	*Klein.*
Symphony, C minor - - - -	*Beethoven.*
"Hallelujah Chorus" (Messiah) -	*Handel.*

A selection comprising three master-works could hardly have been made less satisfactory than this. The two instrumental *solos*, though very well played, were sadly out of place, not only in a church, but with reference to the massive and dignified compositions among which they were set. Among these last, however, Schneider's psalm is not to be included, it being merely one of those correct and unmarked mediocrities which may, at times, become more antipathetic to the ear than compositions containing glaring faults or frivolities, but still characteristic. Nor could I be satisfied with the execution of Handel's "Hallelujah." Dignity, breadth, grandeur, mass of tone, seemed wanting. It was taken, moreover, too fast. But I have never heard Handel's music given in Germany, with the force, sublimity, and enjoyment, which in England are thrown into its execution.

The Egydien Kirche, as before, was crowded; the orchestra and chorus, as before, were sedulous and energetic. When the symphony of Beethoven was over, a *feu de joie* of splendid *bouquets*, carefully hidden up till then, was discharged upon the conductor by the ladies. But the climax of enthusiasm was yet to come.

This was reserved for the ball in the evening. Of all describable things a ball is one of the most indescribable on paper, unless it be a Paris *bal masqué*, which, indeed, has only too many remarkable features! or a people's ball, which may be a pretty thing. I shall not soon forget a picture I saw, a few weeks later, during a stoppage of the Schnellpost, between Leipsic and Frankfort, at Marksuhl, on the edge of the Thuringian forest, just as twilight was beginning to close in. The little market-place was gaily dressed out. Round the pine-tree in its centre, four smaller ones had been planted. In the midst, raised upon a platform, stood a fiddler and a fifer, playing *galoppe* tunes, in the true spirit, though the fiddle was cracked, and the fife asthmatic. A trombone or two had been laid by, that the musicians, too, might take a turn; and round and round, by that lessening light, were seen careering the entire population of the place: young men in linen frocks, with maidens in their flat country caps, little boys and girls, and tougher older people than are ever to be found on the floor with us, save, perhaps, on a holiday eve in South Wales; the whole party performing their evolutions with an ease, a smoothness, and

an absence of rudeness or riot, delightful to see. They had still some hours of waltz in them! Presently, from among the bystanders, a good-natured man detached himself, and offered to all the *Schnellpost* strangers round a glass of beer from the patriarchal bottle beside him; nor would partners have been wanting, had time and travel allowed any of us to join the maze. But this is a too long digression from the apotheosis of Mendelssohn, which made the ball that closed the Brunswick Festival not only delightful, but describable.

The scene of this festive ceremony was the theatre, which had been gaily decorated for the occasion, though not sufficiently lighted. A suite of rooms had been temporarily added for supper. At the furthest depth of the stage, a stately pavilion, draperied with white, had been erected. This was at first concealed by the curtain, which was kept down till the right moment—the arrival of the composer. When he entered the theatre, according to preconcerted signal, he was met by two young girls, who led him gently forward — the curtain meanwhile slowly rising—to this shrine of honour. Six other young ladies, dressed as *genii*, there awaited

him; and, after a brief address from one of them, a laurel crown was placed on his head.

In other respects, the ball was a mere ball—as I have said, indescribable. Pretty faces, and fresh toilettes, by the hundred; gay and gallant youths, only a little more hairy-visaged and tender than with us at home; a good band playing excellent waltz music; the Duke in his box for a part of the evening; a liberal and plenteous supper; and an English lady standing upright in the midst of the easy, blithe-faced multitude, and declaring, the while she fanned herself with an air of satisfied dignity, that "the company really behaved very well;"—this is all that is to be told concerning the Festival Ball at Brunswick in 1839.

CHAPTER IV.

THIRD DAY.

MENDELSSOHN'S CONCERT—THE OPERA.

Programme of the concert—Schmetzer's singing—Muller's violin-playing—Molique's *concertos*—Mendelssohn's pianoforte playing compared with that of Moscheles, Chopin, Liszt—His fancy—The end of the concert—A general remark or two on North German Festivals—The Schwerin Festival of 1840—Dinner—The new palace at Brunswick—The Hof Theater—More North German good-nature—"Guido and Ginevra"—Well-contrived stage arrangements—A word upon classicality—French operas with German words—The performance—Schmetzer—Pöck—Madame Fischer-Achten—The fourth act—The catastrophe of my evening.

THE last entertainment of the Brunswick Festival was Dr. Mendelssohn's morning concert, given in the saloon where the public dinner had been held. The *programme* was excellent, alike for its selection and its brevity.

FIRST PART.

ture.
" Il mio tesoro," sung by Herr Schmetzer *Mozart.*
rto P. F. (D minor), performed and
composed by - - - - - - *Mendelssohn.*

SECOND PART.

olin *Concerto.* Herr Müller - - - *Molique.*
ade P. F. and orchestra, performed and
composed by - - - - - - *Mendelssohn.*
mphony (A major) - - - - *Beethoven.*

he pianoforte was, of course, in this concert, principal attraction. Herr Schmetzer's ing of "Il mio tesoro," was coarse and nished. Moreover, Herr Müller, the leader he renowned Brunswick quartett, though an llent violin-player of the true, as opposed to tremulous and spasmodic school originated Paganini, failed to interest me either by any iality of execution, or in the choice of his ic. With all their soundness of construc- , and the quaint and graceful piquancy of e of their *finales*, there is a certain dryness in *concertos* of Molique, which renders them but derately attractive to the amateur who is no inist, save when they are aided by their poser's sound and humorous performance. he pianoforte playing, then, was the chief

treat. It is rarely that I have been so delighted without novelty or surprise having some share in the delight. It would have been absurd to expect much *pianism*, as distinct from music, in the performance of one writing so straightforwardly, and without the coquetries of embroidery, as Mendelssohn. Accordingly, his performance had none of the exquisite *finesses* of Moscheles, on the score of which it has been elsewhere said, that "there is wit in his playing;" none of the delicate and plaintive and spiritual seductions of Chopin, who swept the keys with so insinuating and gossamer a touch, that the crudest and most chromatic harmonies of his music floated away under his hand, indistinct, yet not unpleasing, like the wild and softened discords of the Æolian harp; none of the brilliant extravagances of Liszt, by which he illuminates every composition he undertakes, with a living but lightening fire, and imparts to it a soul of passion, or a dazzling vivacity, the interpretation never contradicting the author's intention, but more poignant, more intense, more glowing than ever the author dreamed of. And yet, no one that ever heard Mendelssohn's pianoforte-playing could find it dry—could fail to be excited

and fascinated by it, despite of its want of all the caprices and colourings of his contemporaries. Solidity, in which the organ touch is given to the piano without the organ ponderosity—spirit (witness his execution to the *finale* of the D minor *Concerto*) animating, but never intoxicating the ear—expression which, making every tone sink deep, required not the garnishing of trills and *appoggiaturi*, or the aid of changes of time, were among its outward and salient characteristics. Within, and beyond all these, though hard to be conveyed in words, there was to be felt a mind clear and deep; an appreciation of character and form referring to the inner spirit rather than the outward details: the same which gives so exquisitely southern a character to barcarole, and gondola tune in the composer's "Lieder ohne Worte," and its fresh, Ossianic, sea-wildness to his overture to the "Hebriden," ("Isles of Fingal"); the same which enabled him, when little more than a boy, in the happiest piece of descriptive music of our time, to illustrate Shakspeare's exquisite fairy scenes neither feebly nor unworthily. Demanding, as it does, execution without grimace; fancy, cheerful and excursive, but never morbid; and feeling

under the control of a serene, not sluggish spirit —Mendelssohn's is eminently manly music; and loses effect, beyond that of almost any other of his contemporaries, when attempted by female hands.

The *Concerto* and the Serenade were too soon over—things to be regretted as not lasting longer, for the sake of the manner in which they were performed, and because they were almost the last music of the evening. The applause which attended them was what might have been expected—what was deserved. Then came the beautiful Symphony by Beethoven, which was nardly relished according to its merits—for who can settle himself to enjoy a last pleasure? Then drove up the primitive equipages, and the remarkable charioteers I had watched arrive, in such a different mood, but three days before; and the glory of "the celebrity," as Dr. Burney primly called the Handel Commemoration in Westminster Abbey—was over!

Such was that hearty enjoyable thing, a North German Festival in 1839; falling short of the

splendour of our own provincial meetings, in the absence of commanding great talent; but devoid of the costliness, the cumbrousness, the fatigue, and the discomfort, which used to make an Oratorio in Birmingham, York, or Norwich, very nearly as awful a pleasure as a coronation or a state funeral.

The very important part taken by amateurs in these meetings, too, distinguished them from the generality of English performances some dozen years ago. It ensured to the musical execution that highest good-will and enjoyment which is not by any possibility to be purchased from those to whom professional performance is a mechanical habit, cultivated for profit. Where almost every father, mother, or lover, among the audience has a *Lotte* or *Lena* in the chorus to look after, a chorus becomes a much more interesting object than in cases where it is contracted for by some chorus-master, and the faces belong to the ragged, mournful nymphs and cavaliers of the theatre, so rueful to see, however fine they may be to hear! Twelve years ago, this intimate, and (so to say) family air, imparted to a grand performance, was relishing to an Englishman, because of its strangeness.

We have lived to see wonderful approaches towards its adoption in England.

The selections of music given on these occasions, however, were sometimes calculated to disappoint those who had conceived a high idea of German musical taste and cultivation. At the Summer Festival of 1840, given at Mecklenburg-Schwerin, where, also, Mendelssohn presided, and the "St. Paul," with the "Creation," were performed entire, four of the vocal pieces at the concert were, an air by Faccioli, Donnizetti's sickly "Vivi tu," Bellini's noisy duet, "Suoni la tromba," and a flimsy bravura, with violin *obbligato*, from Herold's "Pré aux Clercs." I do not believe that Schubert's songs were, at that time, in any German concerts, stock pieces, as much in request as they were already at Paris.

On the other hand, this very Schwerin Festival furnished a signal illustration of the extent to which, before the Revolutions of 1848, Music brought "gentle and simple" together in Germany. So pervading was the importance of the meeting that the Duke placed all his officers and household attendants at the service of the committee.

But though the Brunswick Festival was over, the guests seemed still loath to separate. The table at the "Blue Angel" was as full as usual; the indescribable viands with which it was spread were, as usual, consumed "lustily, and with good courage." My lot cast me into the neighbourhood of a very gentlemanly and agreeable officer: but the subject of our conversation was anything but gratifying—it being the coarse and disgraceful outbreaks by which certain of King Ernest of Hanover's then newly imported satellites, had recently managed to degrade the name of Englishman in the country. I was glad to change the subject for the Harz country, and Mademoiselle Löwe, of the Berlin Opera—a never-failing topic. So often as I sat down to table, or entered a public conveyance, in 1839-40, this lady's gifts and graces were extolled to me with warm commendation as the best thing in North Germany.

Dinner was despatched in greater haste than usual, and the guests were banding together in plans for the rest of the day—the favourite one being a ride of seven miles along the newly completed railroad to Wolfenbuttel, where a *Café Turc*, with its excellent band of music, opened its

doors to gratify the national propensity for coffee-house and tea-garden meetings. Less than this contented me; and having a place in the diligence to Goslar, which I thought would start early the next morning, and a stall for the opera that evening, I gave myself up to the moment, and strolled out to have one more look at a pleasant place I was not likely soon to see again. My hour's ramble was principally occupied in admiring the outside of the Palace, the new building by Herr Ottmer, already celebrated among the musicians by his excellent and classical Sing-Academie at Berlin, and who is, if I mistake not, a Brunswicker. Nor was it a small pleasure, while sauntering round this fine building, and regaling myself among the orange-trees which border its terraces, to encounter so many good-humoured and well-dressed groups of all classes and conditions: so the afternoon hour went over tranquilly and agreeably, till it was time to drop into my place at the Court Theatre.

The Opera House at Brunswick is agreeably sized; indeed, most of the theatres in Germany are well proportioned; if small, without that feeling of confinement—if large, without that obtrusive vastness, which severally make our London

minor and major theatres so comfortless, in spite of the superior beauty of their decorations. The ducal box is to the left of the stage, and the first row of stalls was exclusively occupied by blue uniform coats and bullion epaulettes; the whole caparison so redolent of tobacco, that one regretted it should be worn by such clean-limbed, comely wearers. Hospitality and civility, I have said, were in the air of Brunswick. In England, we are too apt to behave in our public places, to the neighbours chance sends us, as though every look we gave them was a demonstration defensive of home, hearth, and pocket, against *Robert Macaire* and other such gentry; or if we lay aside our surliness and break through that barricade of monosyllabic remark — the "*fluide Britannique*," with which George Sand charges us—it is to overdo civility and become indiscreetly familiar. Between the acts of the opera, I was claimed, by one of the most agreeably intelligent gentlemen I ever encountered, whom I had all the week admired at the *table d'hôte*, for the care he took of his charge—two young ladies; and because his head reminded me of the beautiful and spiritual sketch in oil of Thorwaldsen brought from Rome by Rothwell.

Not only now did he give me more information than I was able to take in and remember, about the objects of natural and scientific interest in the district I was bound for; but he encouraged one of his shy, gentle-looking companions to talk to the stranger on lighter topics, with an obvious pride in her excellent English, manifested by a complacent smile at every remark she made, which was very engaging. I could not but think, while profiting by his good-nature, how differently matters go at home, and how little chance any ill-dressed foreigner, with two travelling words of the language in his mouth—the "How much?" for instance—that inquiry introducing the innocent German in England to such a painful acquaintance with the different values of money — would run of having his evening's pleasure in one of our theatres thus enhanced.

I had naturally anticipated my first opera in Germany with great interest. My expectations, it is true, in some matters were not immoderate. I feared, from my experiences of the Festival, that I should find voices better willed than taught to sing, and actors whose physical powers were a little at variance with the characters they under-

took to represent—a *Juliet* of a certain age, and of a matronly port—a *Romeo* guiltless of figure, but not guiltless of obtrusively displaying his deficiencies, by dress and gesture. But I had some experience of German orchestras and choruses; some hope, in *Herr Kapellmeister* Methfessel's selection of good music; and it never, in those days, had occurred to me that I was to come to the Brunswick Festival to hear M. Halévy's "Guido and Ginevra,"—a work not particularly popular in its birth-place, Paris, though there aided by the magnificent voice and magnificent acting of Duprez.

There are some stories for which novelists and dramatists have a hankering thoroughly unaccountable. One is this same legend of the *Strada della Morte* in Florence,—which in Magdeburg is given to the Frau von Assenburg's monument, —and in England, I now forget to which Abbey Church vault:—a legend which not even Mr. Hunt's rich and delicate poetry and fine conception of character* have been able to popularise

* Though the "Legend of Florence" has been the subject of much excellent criticism, it seems as if one of its strongest points of excellence has been too generally overlooked—the character of *Agolanti*, as a study of bad temper. To make so ignoble a failing an object of sympathy is impossible; it is but the grander

with us. The French librettist M. Scribe,—unlike the rest who have been led away by one or two effective situations to treat a subject in its interest singularly morbid, and in its close altogether intractable, — has set these in the midst of horrors of great melodramatic potency, and thus made up a book, after its coarse kind, exceedingly effective. It may be this, yet more than a tendency to play French Opera, which has helped to insure for "Guido and Ginevra" a popularity in Germany, never gained by it in Paris. This was its first performance in Brunswick.

In writing of the component parts of German

crimes and the grander passions which exercise a fascinating influence. But in Mr. Hunt's play there is an individuality thrown into the part of the harsh and cruel husband, which makes him far overtop all his other fellow-actors, and gives his unjust doings a share in our interest as well as their sorrows. He has his trials as well as *Ginevra*. He has within him that dark and perverted spirit which makes him strong in his own warped sense of predominance and authority: he is beset without by a herd of gay, communicative, interfering, people, whose very presence is hateful to one so grave and reserved; and who, while they plead with him and lecture him, are totally unable to comprehend the terrible possession under the influence of which he inflicts the wrongs they would benevolently redress. He is, in short, altogether the man of real life, not the unredeemed villain whom "limners love to paint, and ladies to look upon;" and there are few figures in the list of modern creation so simply and clearly conceived, so simply and completely wrought out.

opera, according to the degrees of merit, first should come the chorus and orchestra; then the singers in combination; then the stage arrangements; lastly, the singers individually considered. But yet more than by the orchestra, for which M. Halévy's music offers such ample occupation,—and yet more than by the chorus, which, in the "Guido," is put to sing the poorest music in which any national style was ever attempted,—was I struck with the exceeding propriety and sedulousness with which the opera was got up. The stage arrangements at Brunswick were the first illustrations I witnessed in Germany, of the skill and intelligence which are brought to bear upon every performance; no matter what the means may be—no matter what the scale on which it is produced. Thus, in the "Guido," the first act has the *festa* of the *Madonna de l'Arco;* the third, a double scene, the upper portion of which displays a dim and mouldering chapel, with a remote perspective of heavy columns and arches draperied with banners, and hung with heraldic escutcheons; the one requiring prodigality as to numbers and decorations—the other, space. Both were afforded on a stage of no very eminent

dimensions, the former from a wardrobe and store of properties any thing but dazzling.

The execution of M. Halévy's music by the orchestra and chorus was very good, though short, of course, of the high finish of *l'Académie Royale*. To have looked for this would have been preposterous: the wonder is, not that the truest style and the most delicate polish should not be entirely attained, but that correctness and firmness of performance should be possible under the circumstances. In 1839-40, not only was a constant change of opera performances part of every system of management throughout Germany, but a constant change of schools. The traveller would hear one night "L'Elisir d'Amore;" the next, "La Sonnambula,"—"Le Postillon de Longjumeau" as a certainty, —nor less certainly Meyerbeer's "Robert,"— however limited might be the resources of the theatre. At that time there was curiously small opportunity of hearing even the stock-operas of Mozart and Weber; and the principal Brunswick singers employed in this very "Guido"— Herren Pöck and Schmetzer—when in London, were found somewhat unprepared for the classical music of their own country which they

were called upon to perform there. Thus, not only was it next to impossible that there should be any settlement of style as regards performance, such as at once decides the individuality of a French orchestra, but the number of rehearsals must also necessarily have been very limited. All the musical world knows to what extent the composer's privilege in this respect is carried at the Parisian opera; where again his ministers in the orchestra have not to contend with a strange and antipathetic music. I do not suppose that it would be possible with French singers, and under French direction, even at the great metropolitan theatre, to "get together" the "Euryanthe" of Weber in twice the time which probably in Brunswick was devoted to the study of the "Guido and Ginevra." The neatness of Herr Methfessel's orchestra particularly struck me, in one passage of *Ginevra's* great tomb scene, where a rapidly moving accompaniment of groups of six semiquavers, passes from tenor to bass, in an unbroken and close *pizzicato*, requiring much firmness to maintain. The female chorus was crude in tone; but its part in the opera lies high, and frequently in those extreme keys which the elder composers judi-

ciously avoided, even in days when the diapason of the orchestra was some half a tone lower than it is now.

The principal singers went through their parts moderately well, but no more. The peculiar structure of the French language stamps so much individuality of form upon its music, that the latter, when mated with a translated text, becomes generally ungracious. Even Rossini's "Guillaume Tell," which is not wholly French, loses (so to say) its *bouquet*, when given with Italian words. How much more must the music of M. Halévy suffer, every note of which tells of Paris and the *Conservatoire*, by being fitted with the heavier and less tractable German rhymes and phrases! Hence the efforts of the vocal *corps*, though satisfactory, were very laborious. Herr Schmetzer, was never the person best fitted by Nature to enact the part of a love-lorn swain. He had attired himself, too, with singular courage: and having forborne, by "planting out" the flatnesses of his face after the picturesque fashion of Italian heroes, to give his beautiful voice the chance of seeming to issue from chivalric lips, the painful contortions of his fat tenderness amounted

to the ridiculous, reminding one, when his sadness was the sorest, of Jan Steen's saints and martyrs. But he sung the exquisitely mannered *romance* in the first act tolerably sentimentally; and in the great tomb scene, where the hero goes down into the vault to bewail his beloved ere her trance breaks, as a deep and friendly shadow veiled his gesticulations, he was forcible and impressive. Herr Pöck, the *Agolanti* of the opera, performed the cruel husband's part with manly, muscular spirit, and an amplitude of crude tone, leading every one to regret that position or inclination had caused him to neglect the refinements of vocal cultivation. Madame Fischer-Achten, again, though chargeable with that maturity of person which, to English eyes, amounts to so serious a drawback, pleased me more than any German *prima donna* I was afterwards to hear, by a fair *soprano* voice capable of neat and easy execution, and a truth and intensity of passion of which our operatic ladies in those days rarely dreamed. The actor who played *Fortebraccio*, the hired assassin, by whose ministry *Ginevra* is poisoned, at the instance of her rival, the courtezan *Ricciarda*, was at once feeble, heavy, and elaborate in his attempts to give the

dash of cowardly and superstitious humour which the part requires to relieve the odium of his mercenary villany. But such attempt was made: the whole *corps*, indeed, was in possession of the story as well as of the music, and carried the audience along with them. Nor was the Brunswick audience difficult to carry along;—seeming to be at once fair and patient, willing and enthusiastic. I should have been ashamed of myself, could I have there criticised by the stop-watch, and forborne to bear the enthusiasm company.

"Guido and Ginevra" has never been played in England, with or without music; so it may be mentioned that, to heighten the story with an additional dose of horror, the scene is laid in Florence, during the time of the plague, and the death of *Ginevra* is compassed by the mercenary *Fortebraccio* selling to her an infected veil. In the fourth act, after she has been delivered from the tomb by the band of plunderers who descend thither to strip the rings from her fingers, Poetical Justice ordains that the pestilence should strike the husband, who refuses to receive her,—and that upon his wretched mistress showing terror and cowardice, and attempting to

escape, he should drag her towards him, and declare frantically that she is his for life and death! Grossly repulsive as is the melodrame of this situation, I was for the moment all eye and ear,—so thoroughly wound up to the highest pitch of attention, as to be annoyed by a whispering in my neighbourhood, and impatient at having my coat-sleeve plucked. I turned at last —to meet a dozen moist, heated, earnest faces looking furious things at me for my impassiveness in not having earlier attended to a summons which by this time was disturbing all the *parterre*.

It was a moment before a romantic theory of *espionnage* and police connected with my questioner in the black velvet coat had flashed past me. Who *could* want me? There he stood—the civil, fat, flustered head waiter of the "Blue Angel," mopping his forehead, and quite too much out of breath to speak. Cruikshank or Leech might have designed his look of upbraiding impatience at the tardiness with which the truth broke upon me, that the *eilwagen* for Goslar started, not, as I had pleased to suppose, at eight on the following morning, but at ten that very night,—the third quarter after

nine having already struck; my bill being still unpaid, and my baggage still unpacked. Greater became the honest man's disapproval, when he found that I could only laugh at the blunder—only laugh while scouring the streets at his heels to the astonishment of the placid evening pleasurers—only laugh at the scene awaiting me in my comfortless little room at the "Blue Angel." There the entire household, from Herr Driesen, the landlord, down to the least male thing in his employ, was bent on the hospitable duty "of speeding the parting guest;"—one cramming away an odd stocking; another a bunch of pens and a journal; a third, in his zeal to economize space, and to give me every tittle that rightfully belonged to me, all but emptying a half-finished bottle of Seltzer water into the compartment of my portmanteau allotted to clean linen. It was all in vain: the clock struck the fatal hour long ere the task was done; and the *thalers* paid for my place must needs be sacrificed. It was vexatious, with them, to have lost the end of "Guido and Ginevra," which I know not even to this day.—The rest was all easy enough. It was easy to resign myself to another night in

Brunswick, and to take vehicle the next day for Halberstadt, which, though not in a direct route, was equally eligible with Goslar as a starting point to the Harz country.

IN THE HARZ.

1839.

CHAPTER I.

A NIGHT ON THE BROCKEN.

From Brunswick to Halberstadt—Mademoiselle Löwe—The "Prince Eugene" at Halberstadt—Its landlord—News of Lord Eglintoun and the Marquis of Waterford—The "Close" in Halberstadt—The Jehu—Wernigerode—Travelling puppet-show—Ilsenburg—Inn sketches—The old man and the child—Walk to Ilsenstein—Ascent of the Brocken—The Brocken-haus—Göttingen students—The sunset—More inn sketches—The traveller's book; German and English entries therein—The entertainment of the evening—A word on part-singing and popular music in Germany—*Liedertafeln* Societies founded by Zelter—Younger *Liedertafel* Society—Their meetings—Their organization—The Germans' love of scenery as well as smoke—Weber's part-songs—"Am Rhein"—German ignorance of English part-songs—The winding up of the orgie.

A TRIFLE of tobacco-smoke to be swallowed allowed for, the drive from Brunswick to Halberstadt was pleasant enough. The afternoon was glorious—the perfection of autumn weather—

and the road offers some agreeable objects. Between Brunswick and Wolfenbuttel stands the Duke's country-house of Richmond, which is apparently as English in its Elizabethan style, and in the trimness of the rich garden round it, as in its name. Then the trees on either side of the way were hung with a profusion of apples, plums, and pears, glowing with every sunny colour of the season, and so appetizing as to make it positively disappointing that, at the first change of horses, no other refection was to be procured than a cup of coffee and a cigar. Every trench-bank and field enclosure, too, showed a roadside Flora of poppies, campanulas, and huge mulleins, gay enough to attract any eye that is sensitive to rich colour. Not long after Wolfenbuttel was left behind, the Brocken began to rise on the horizon;—and what is there in the world so engaging to the fancy as watching the gradual growth of a hill,—more especially if the hill have a name and a legend?

My companions in the *schnellpost* were cheerful and good-natured. While waiting under the vine which clothes the wall of the Brunswick post-house, we had become very

sociable. As we jogged on, we discussed the Festival just over, and agreed that Mendelssohn was the musical hope of modern Germany. I was warned, when I reached Leipsic, to open my ears to Mademoiselle Schlegel,* as a young singer of great promise, and excessively pretty to boot. I was promised a wonderful treat in Berlin, from the Löwe—the only songstress, as far as my experience served, who enjoyed a general, as distinguished from a local reputation, in North Germany,—and who was then as popular among all travellers as Madame Vestris in England. It was of no use to quote Grisi or Persiani,—had I named Madame Dorus-Gras, a French singer, it would have been as much as my popularity was worth. "There was no one, there had been no one, like the Löwe, for beauty and brilliancy, since the days of Sontag. —Happy was the man who could hear her, and happier he who could speak to her!"

The day went down gloriously, and the friendly and thriving town of Halberstadt, where we joined the great road to Berlin, looked quaintly picturesque in the strong lights and broad purple shadows of evening. I cannot

* Now Madame Köster. 1852.

fancy a pleasanter halting-place for a night than the "Prince Eugene." While I was discussing the savoury roast partridge (a sure *piece de resistance*, let me warn all those whom the indigestibilities of a German supper *karte* annoy), the master of the house came and took the chair at my side,—as handsome, well-informed, and thoroughly courteous a host as Prussia can show. One of my fellow-travellers had acquainted him with my designs on the Harz country, and my inexperience in its language; and, with as much circumstantial civility as he could have used to detain the most desirable guest, in ten minutes of very good French, the whole plan was arranged for me, commodiously and inexpensively, and I was at leisure to satisfy as well as I could the curiosity of my friendly entertainer about the Eglintoun tournament.—Upon the strength of this, the Coronation, and the London and Birmingham railroad, any one who could communicate was sure of being voted agreeable in Germany during the summer of 1839. Only six weeks later, while sitting among heaps of pressed grapes, at the door of a tavern at St. Goar, waiting the coming of a Rhine steamer, I saw the boatman who had rowed me from

the Lurleiberg pause over his bottle of colourless and fragrant wine, and the untidy landlady let her knitting drop forgotten on her knee, while a white-haired and spectacled official belonging to that small town read aloud, from the "Rhein-und-Mosell-Blatt," the tragical issue of Mr. Pratt's upholstery, and the last Scottish freak of the Marquis of Waterford. To think of thus stumbling, as it were, upon Lord's Cricket Ground and Limmer's Hotel, within sight of the Katz and the Schweitzer Thal!

But I am wandering away from the capital host, and capital coffee, and capital bed, at the "Prince Eugene."—It was five o'clock in the morning when I woke and leaned out of my window. The air was clear and fresh enough to put spleen itself into spirits—the sky without a cloud, and day coming up so fast and so brightly behind the minarets of the great church as to declare that a splendid sunrise was at hand. Splendid it was; and I hastened abroad to spend the half-hour which was to elapse ere the vehicle and Jehu purveyed for my Harz excursion made their appearance, in prying about the little town. But I did not get beyond the Platz—a fine enclosure shaded with well-grown trees, surrounded

with ancient houses, and commanded at its extremities by Our Lady's Church and the Cathedral—a pair of grand old buildings, which looked solemn, but not severe, in the cheerful but delicate light of early day. In a niche against one of the houses was a grim carved effigy, which, for collar, had been decked with a garland of flowers—now withered. Here and there the morning face of comfortable man or comely matron looking out of an open door, or through a diamond-bright window, made an impromptu Ostade, which would have been worth its hundreds in a picture gallery.—Few places seen so casually have left so clear and so cheerful an impression on my mind as Halberstadt. To judge from the list of its manufactories it ought to be thriving as well as cheerful; nor should the lover of letters like it the less from its having been the residence of Gleim, the Mæcenas of some of Germany's best men of genius. To tempt the musician, I have but to say that the organist of the Cathedral, whom we met at Brunswick, so loudly vaunted his instrument (but organists have that way with them), that Dr. Mendelssohn had consented but the day before my arrival to stop on his homeward

journey to Leipsic, and give it a trial at the hour of fashionable London midnight, or six in the morning.

Half an hour behind his time, a shabby little carriage, drawn by a shabby little pair of horses, jingled up to the door of the "Prince Eugene." But the equipage was well worth waiting for in virtue of its driver,—as honest, good-natured, and intelligent a fellow as ever made a party of pleasure more pleasant. Small civil eyes with a touch of roguery in them,—a walnut-brown complexion, a wide mouth containing a case of the whitest, cleanest teeth in North Germany, —a stout jean shooting-jacket, and a tidy blue cloth cap, such ingredients made up my Jehu,— who, to crown his perfections, could command a few words of French, a few of English, a few of Latin, and neither smoked nor wished to smoke. He deserved to belong to the town.—We were presently rattling through its ancient gateway, and across the open plain towards the hill country.—The morning kept its early promises —more inspiriting weather for a ramble could not be imagined—and those alone, who, during fifteen years, have only exchanged town for town, can comprehend the fulness of good-will

with which I gave myself up to the influence of the hour and the scenery.

It was a day of pictures. For the first German mile we had groups of people harvesting in the fields, looking up as we passed to nod, and greet us with a good-humoured "*tag*," or hailing us from the primitive waggons of the country upon which they were clustered. Then, though wretchedly poor was the hamlet (I lost its name) at which Carl Alhelm stopped to give his horses and himself breakfast from the same junk of *pumpernickel* — it was a fair specimen of the ruinous-picturesque. Shortly after leaving this, the hills, every one of which has its own quaint form and its own quaint legend, began to close in upon us,—the fruit-trees on either side the road to be fewer, and the chestnuts more numerous. We were presently within sight of Wernigerode, a strange little walled town, overcrowed by its castle—an imposing but heavy mass of building which loads the thickly-planted hill rising abruptly beyond the walls. Not far from this we encountered another painter's group. It was an itinerant puppet-show, the properties of which, dead and living, were crammed into a small covered cart, while the

lank, knavish, gipsy-looking man, who throughout all the world presides over such vanities, trudged lazily on by its side. I have seen a "Flight into Egypt" by one of the ancient Flemish masters—Paul Brill, perhaps, or Breughel—with precisely such a landscape, and figures little more refined. Wernigerode was soon passed, and Altenrode too, of whose old convent there was no getting a peep among the high walls and thick-leaved plum-trees, and a good hour before mid-day we were fairly on the skirts of the Wonderland; at Ilsenburg—a little red-roofed village nestling picturesquely in the opening of the valley, where the Ilse, clear and brown as a cairngorm stone, hurries out into the plain. At the "Red Trout"—a pleasant little inn—mules and guides are to be heard of, and, report says, to be paid for exorbitantly. In my own case it was not so: the breakfast was cheap and good; and my Jehu, from whom I was here to part company for the day, found out a guide for me, who, if less companionable, was no less honest and civil than himself.

There were other parties bound for the Brockenhaus—our station for the night—whom

I had time to observe during my own breakfast, and while waiting till the guide should have dined. One pair in particular — an old man and a boy—made a singular contrast. Never did I see a more repulsive study of age without respectability than the former—a lean, nimble, brawling fellow, for ever in a passion, who wore a long loose wrap-rascal, the shrunk sleeves of which showed the whole of his enormous hands, and a cap perched upon, rather than covering, a profuse crop of ill-kept and coarse grizzled hair. But his face was the worst: its yellow and blood-shot eyes, its brindled complexion of scarlet and tawny, its dry, thirsty mouth garnished with straggling teeth, and always agape to the misery of every one in the neighbourhood, told of debauchery as plainly as they could speak. His companion was a fair gracious-looking boy of fourteen, with a clear blue eye, rosy German cheeks, and a voice as shrill but twice as loud as a girl's. For a good five minutes after they had left the "Red Trout," I heard the hoarse bawl of the one, and the piercing answer of the other, as they pushed off towards the Brocken. It was a positive boon to be spared such company on the road.

My guide came. He, too, was an old man, but with his wise withered face and his white hair, his tidy blouse and his sheepskin knapsack, he looked like a palmer, when compared with the unclean roisterer who had just quitted us. In five minutes we were beyond the boundaries of Ilsenburg, and, turning away from the stream, began to ascend a steep bank, close under the walls of a poor little gray church, built among the ruins of a monastery. This can now only be traced in a dusty and dark cellar, the mouth of which must be passed by all who would mount to the Ilsenstein. The path leads through a croft, which was as thickly spread with the lilac crocus as if it were a Nottingham meadow. Then comes a fir wood: huge stones shagged with moss, peering out capriciously on either side of the path; and among them the richest tufts of foxgloves I have ever seen. Where, indeed, should faëry-caps grow if not in the Harz country?—Here and there, as we began to mount, an opening through the trees afforded a lovely prospect of the plain, dotted with clean red-roofed villages, and framed by the entrance of the valley. The Ilsenstein, passing which—as all the readers of Shelley's

wonderful fragment from "Faust" know—the Witch, on the Walpurgis-night, saw—

"the owl awake in the white moonshine,"

is a grand promontory of rock, jutting out into the valley, and crowned with an iron cross, in memorial of the brave achievements of Count Stolberg's troop during the war. The view thence is superb. But with the best will in the world to surround myself with a visionary atmosphere, I could not do it. The day was too fine; the brawling of the stream, when we again joined it, was too merry and musical; and the only thing to be noted as in the least "eerie," was the stillness of the columnar pine woods through which we mounted—broken, not by bird or breeze, but by the clicking of the locked wheels of the charcoal-burners' carts as they slipped down to the valley below—a measured but unfamiliar sound. As we ascended higher, the cessation of this noise was supplied by the perpetual bubbling and tinkling of countless runnels of water, that creep away under the stones, which shoulder each other as countlessly and closely as if the Gnomes had made a compact that not a tree should have room to grow. In

spite of all the fancies of the scene, however, the ascent of the Brocken, even to one endowed with the most willing of imaginations, is a rough and picturesque walk of three hours and a half, up a tolerably steep and very stony hill—nothing more.

The little plain at the top, like all mountain plains, is harsh and barren in its physiognomy. The inn is a strong and gloomy house of refuge, one story high. The wind was keen enough, even on that still afternoon, to intimate how it *could* roar about the thick logs and timbers of which the Brockenhaus is built. Hard by the inn stands a tower, also built of massive wood, and the view thence is as magnificent as expanse can make it: small points, which the eye must strain itself to see honestly, standing for towns; hair lines for roads; and tufts of moss for reaches of wood. There is nothing, however, either in distance or foreground, to render it comparable to the panorama commanded by the Great Winterberg in Saxon Switzerland. Had I enjoyed the tower to myself, nevertheless, I could have lingered there, as long as daylight lasted, to exercise the powers of discovery for which such a wide prospect gives fair occasion; but I had at

least twenty fellow-gazers; and what with the hubbub made by them while hacking their names on the timber battlements—contradicting each other about this *schloss* or the other spire, at boatswain pitch—hallooing to their mates down below, or playing violent tricks with each other—a noisier score of scenery-hunters

"you would not find in Christendie."

They were, for the most part, a party of students from Göttingen—fine lawless fellows, unkempt and loosely dressed, with every vagary of travelling-cap and knapsack, tobacco-bag and forefinger ring—more dirty, more good-natured, more jovial, than anything of the same order to be found in England. If they had planned, during a whole season of class and lecture-work, to come and "make a night of it" on the Brocken, they could not more thoroughly have carried their purposes into execution. The host, who sat in the outer hall of the house making bird-traps, seemed to concern himself little for their comfort; and, now drinking, now smoking, now chasing each other, they scrambled hither and thither, to the *Hexen* altar, and the other stations of a Harz pilgrimage, till the setting of the sun,

and the bitter sharpness of the mountain air, drove them under cover.

Were I able to do it justice, I should hardly venture to expatiate upon that set or burial of the sun, among such intensely mazarine blue clouds, as the ancient artists sometimes introduced into their landscapes with more enterprise than success. After all was gray, there remained still a long evening to be got through in a comfortless apartment, with no luxury of fare attainable to beguile the time. The party of *bürschen* withdrew into a room of their own; and there were left in the *speise-saal* with me, the aged iniquity I had seen at Ilsenburg, his companion with the childish face and voice; another youth, a regular and respectable specimen of the German traveller; and a fourth, who, after his own pattern, was as pretty an example of a rough diamond as one could desire. He might be some twenty-one years old, or thereabouts—stalwart, thick-set, clean-limbed, and bullet-headed; succinctly done up in a sand and salt-coloured coat, the laps of which buttoned behind in a manner more original than becoming; with breeches and gaiters of the same. His fist was as huge as that of Duke Adolph of Gueldres, in

Rembrandt's marvellous portrait at Berlin; his stentorian voice never was still; his thick utterance was to be ascribed to the loss of two front teeth, which gave a peculiar villany of impudence to his face; and when the huge bull-dog belonging to the Brockenhaus, Cerberus by name, nestled up to the side of his chair, and, lifting up a surly head, showed a hair-lip, the similarity of expression between the human and the canine visages was as strong as anything in Hood's inimitable sketches of Comparative Anatomy. Man and dog—alike burly and savage—were the very figures for a Harz adventure.

Rough as my companions presently proved themselves to be, there was none of that insolence in all their riot which makes the young Englishman, when unchained, or, according to his own parlance, "out on a lark," often so intolerable. If they bawled for wine, it was that the foreigner might share; if they threatened the host with extinction because he had no cards, it was because *we* could not play; and on my withdrawing myself from their clamour, to turn over that motley record, the "Traveller's Book," I was neither molested by word, look, or

sign; nor was the orgie, when at its climax, made an excuse for the slightest uncivil freedom.

This unexpected observance of the humanities by a party so thoroughly wild, and by contrast made striking, when I thought of my neighbour at the Brunswick Festival dinner, was further illustrated—at least fancy would have it so—by the greasy pages of the *Fremdenbuch*, to which I betook myself; the four being now deep in a game not unlike the Italian *morra*. Teazed as I was with their riot; disgusted by the hoarse shrieks of the old gray-haired man, who seemed the most unruly of the party, I think I was yet more vexed by the stupidities, and worse, to which English signatures were annexed in the "Strangers' Book." Enough high-flown German enthusiasm there was, no doubt;—doubtless, too, some German grossness;—but while I stumbled upon traces of almost every singer and dancer belonging to the Brunswick Opera, some of the names garnished with quotations, harmlessly expressive of some feeling for the scene,—it was vexatious to find Englishmen of title and family announcing their presence in one of Nature's high places, by dull and trivial jokes, which

showed how little admiration they could have brought thither. Captain *This* chronicled the day when he "jumped Jim Crow on the Brocken." Sir *That*, in tracing his route, wrote himself down "as having come from nowhere, and going to Hell." The whole truth should not be spoken at all times, and in all places, says Lord Chesterfield! With such humiliating evidences before me, I felt I had little right to quarrel with the confusion worse confounded, of shouts, exclamations, and part-songs, which bade fair to deafen me as the advance of evening wrought them up to a *crescendo*. By this time the sky had grown pitch black; and in the rare intervals, when a moment's pause permitted its being heard, there came up from the plain below, a murmur of the night-wind, as quiet as a whisper, but as deep in tone as the lowest pedal pipe of an organ. Save for that intimation, it would have been far easier to fancy one's self in Auerbach's Cellar, than on the top of the haunted mountain; for the merry ditties of Zumsteeg, and Eisenhofer, and Blum, and Osthoff, and the explosions of laughter which burst out on every side, had quite too much of rough earthly glee in them, to be for an

instant accepted as the Satanic music of a Walpurgis night.

These part-songs were, in 1839, little known in England, as one of the most national and not least engaging features in modern German music. We had, till then, rested upon our glees with a complacency so exclusive as to make us overlook what our neighbours were about. I question whether a dozen professors in England had heard of these German efforts before the arrival of the Brothers Herrmann. The latter even were by many, who should have known better, strangely confounded with the Tyrolese minstrels; though their classical quartett-playing (the best rehearsed and understood, heard before 1839 in England) must have puzzled those fancying that the wild national air and the well-constructed composition were "all one concern." Among the French I am inclined to believe that the amount of real taste for, and intimacy with, German music was little less partial. A periodical critic, speaking of a concert given at Frankfort in 1838, which some untoward spirits wished to disturb by singing "La Marseillaise," in proof of the French sympathies of the Germans, says, "And this was in the midst of their

own favourite music—in the midst of a classical programme, combining the severe and the wild —'*des morceaux*' by Beethoven, and Tyrolese airs!"

Nothing can be much more ignorant in its flippancy than this; as if the popular music of Germany had not been contributed by its best hands! It is some fifty years since Zelter (best known in England as Goethe's correspondent) and his friend Fleming founded at Berlin a congregation of staid elderly men, who met once a month to sit down to a good supper, and to diversify the pleasures of the table by singing four-part songs, principally composed by themselves.* Their number was forty; and far the larger part of it composed of amateurs or men in office. It was an original statute that no one was eligible as a member who was not a composer, a poet, or a singer. During his life-

* I am not able to mention the date of Haydn's "Cat's Fugue," in four parts; but I think it must belong to an earlier period, and, in any case, is valuable as an evidence of grave science applied to the popular uses of mirth;—I have heard, too, unless I greatly mistake, of comic part-songs as well as *quodlibets* by Sebastian Bach. I feel it, however, particularly incumbent here to remind the reader that I am not writing history, but sketching impressions.

time Zelter was their president and principal composer; and in no branch of art, perhaps, did his peculiar talent evidence itself so brightly as in these convivial effusions, where humour, raciness, a masterly employment of the limited materials at his disposal, and a fine sense of the poetry he took in hand, distinguish him among his contemporaries. Goethe used to give his songs to be composed by Zelter; and many of them were sung at the Berlin *Liedertafel* before they were printed or known elsewhere. Fleming also contributed some fair musical compositions—that to Horace's ode, "Integer vitæ," amongst others.

It was in the year 1815, or thereabouts, that Berger, Klein, and a younger generation of musicians, founded a young *Liedertafel* society, on the same principle, and for the same number of members. Friedrich Forster wrote some very pretty songs for it. Hoffmann, the novel writer and *kapellmeister*, made it one scene of his strange and extravagant existence; and left behind him there an immortal comic song—"Turkische Music," the words by Friedrich Forster. In general, a gayer and more spirited tone pervaded this younger society than belonged

to their classical seniors. It was the practice of both bodies to invite guests on holiday occasions; and by the younger part-singers ladies were admitted twice a year. Nothing could be sprightlier or pleasanter—a little extra noise allowed for—than these latter meetings.

It would seem as if the old German love of corporate processions—the old affection for guilds and burgherships—found an expression in the societies to which this couple of institutions gave rise. They were not long in spreading far and wide. The good suppers became of less integral consequence; original compositions were not always attainable; but in every town it was natural to collect the younger men of all classes, for the purpose of singing together. A regular system of organization, of division and subdivision, has arranged itself. The town societies in combination form provincial assemblies, where many hundreds come together. In the north of Germany the large class of young men, who are either schoolmasters or organists in the towns and villages, or are educated as such at the normal schools, have societies of their own, and periodical celebrations.

The provincial festivals of these societies are

held in the good time of the year, so that open air performances are practicable. A fine site, too, is a thing always chosen. Not very long before my Harz ramble, the *Liedertafeln* societies of that district had been holding a congress at Blankenburg. The natural man of the German, indeed, which seems to require a pipe every hour, and a refection at every milestone, seems never, by the indulgence of his appetites, to be coarsened out of his love of Nature. He loves a fine view to smoke over; during the years of his cub-*hood* will make a riot in such a sanctuary as the top of the Brocken over night, and still earnestly enjoy the panorama and the mountain-walk in the morning. One might have thought that the beer-cellar and "the bosky bourne" must appeal to a totally different class of pilgrims; but it does not seem so. There is a picturesque spirit in all German public festivities, to which we never approach nearer than by rifling conservatories of their flowers, to die in the stifling and oleaginous atmosphere of a ball-room.—These *Liedertafeln* societies take part in other celebrations not their own. When Schiller's statue was inaugurated in Stuttgart, the singing bodies of all

the towns in the districts round about poured in through the gates of the town, one after the other, each with its banners and its music, till the separate chords, to speak fancifully, united in a grand chorus in the market-place. And while there exists a well-trained army of volunteer choristers ready to be called into action on all occasions—it need not be pointed out how different it is in quality to the body of subordinates at once semi-professional and untaught, at whose mercy lies so much of the best music ever to be heard in England—I should say, *laid;* for part-singing was, even in 1839, already flourishing with us like the bean-tree in the Faëry Tale.

It is needless, again, to remark how the works which make a whole great people vocal,—"a whole country" (to quote a forcible expression of the accomplished musical friend to whom I am here indebted for my facts) "absolutely heave with harmony,"—must have a value and an interest in more aspects than one. If we lay aside the sober and serious compositions of the elderly gentlemen, and, on the other, the familiar "Crambambuli," and other such ditties of the *bürschen* (musical weeds worth nobody's owning), there is on every hand, and in every

guild, much to interest. To offer an instance or two likely to be familiar to the English—lyrical music has nothing nobler in her stores than the battle-songs in which the harmonies of Weber and the burning words of Körner are united. We sit by our firesides, it is true, and know not the sound of an enemy's cavalry in our streets, nor the booming of an enemy's cannon without our gates; and hence are touched only faintly by the spell of the soul within them; but it is impossible coldly to listen to the masculine chords and bold modulations of "Lutzow's Wild Chase," and the "Sword Song," and the "Husarenlied." Again, we have taken home to ourselves and half-nationalised "Am Rhein,"* because of its spirit and beauty;—though we cannot feel, save dramatically and by going out of ourselves as well as from home, the joviality and mirth of those who dwell in a wine-land, or the kindling of such a spirit as moved the army of

* As the Rhine Song is here spoken of as a composition, the name of its composer may be given (on Berlin authority), as it has been attributed by some to Haydn. It is now said to belong to the same Schulz who was employed on a far less ungenial task, the setting to music of the translated choruses of Racine's "Athalie." He was a *kapellmeister* at Copenhagen.

Liberators on their return from victory, when within sight of Ehrenbreitstein, to burst out with one consent into that noble melody which was heard with little ceasing for two days and nights while the band was passing over the river!

Honour, then, to the part-songs of Germany, and better acquaintance with them! is not the worst toast one could propose at a glee club. But I must say, that beyond having harmonized our "Rule Britannia" in one edition of their "Orpheus," or Part-Singer's *Vade Mecum*, my friends the Germans trouble themselves far too little with our vocal music. By the surprise, as well as delight, which I have seen our madrigals excite in them, it is plain that the reciprocal indifference has been mutual. It ought to be so no longer. If these be not great days of creation, they ought to be good days of acquisition. That long rambling vocal *solos* are ineffective and absurd, and that to cut up a poem into as many movements as there are lines is to betray want of power over forms and progressions, the English glee-writer might learn from such well-knit and admirable compositions as the *Rastlose Liebe* of Spohr, or the beautiful recent produc-

tions of Mendelssohn. The German composer of vocal quartetts might learn to lay stress upon such delicacy of effect as is to be gained by the admixture of female voices from such elegant and charming strains as Stevens' "Ye spotted snakes," and Horsley's "See the chariot." I would alike give over to separate and utter demolition, the rambling accompanied *scenas* and songs which some of our classical writers have devised for the exhibition of a bass or counter-tenor voice, and the instrumental *polaccas* and waltz tunes by Blum and Kuffner, and even Eisenhofer (who is sometimes a delicious melodist*), which disfigure their collections. Enough remains on both sides to be of use and help to the rapidly increasing schools of popular music in England and Germany.

This digression is to be understood as filling a chasm in my chronicle. I do not pretend that all these thoughts and fancies arranged themselves in my mind during the long hours of that evening in which the familiar "*Der*

* As in his "*Schlaf wohl,*" one of the most lulling tunes in the catalogue of serenades; in its luxurious sweetness little inferior to the charming theme, "Secondate aurette amici," in "Cosi fan tutte."

Schmidt" of Conradin Kreutzer, and a merry waltz by Blum, with its "*Hop-sa-sa*" burden, were heard but faintly from the next chamber —though sung by a dozen voices—so furious was the noise made by my four companions. Surely never such an outcry came out of so few bottles of wine,—only three, I think, being exhausted by them, and that so foolishly weak in quality as to be almost warrantable under the Temperance seal. Drunk they became, however, to all intents and purposes; and though I had begun by a resolution of holding out to the end as a spectator, about half-past ten the uproar became so ear-splitting that I was fain to quit the company for bed. My ill stars apportioned my chamber next to the room where the revel went on; and though I tried again and again to resort to the "Fantasy Pieces" of Hoffmann, which I had chosen as pocket companion, and again and again endeavoured to read on the Brocken, as I had agreed with myself I would do, his fantastic analysis of Mozart's "Don Juan"—it was all in vain. The table was banged by fists and heels till I thought it must break—the chairs launched hither and thither so furiously that it was a marvel, at

morning-light, to find one leg still united to its partner. Had the wind been provoked to come forth in his utmost fury, he must for once have been outroared. Once or twice mine host tried to quiet a riot so particularly unseasonable to those who were to rise before day-dawn; once the *stube-mädchen* put her head within the door. If piercing noise could take a form, she must have drawn herself back in the condition of the headless barmaid of the goblin tale. It was an hour past midnight ere the unruly pack chose to go to bed. By this time they were all so tipsy —the singers into the bargain—that to stow each in his appointed lodgment was not easy. Up and down the corridor which divides the Brockenhaus, they rushed like a menagerie let loose, pelting each other with their boots, or fighting to keep together or asunder for the night. Two of them, in one of these conflicts, at last burst my door open, and threw all their drunken weight on my bed. Luckily, my light had been extinguished for some time, and I could take means, by the aid of the tough vine-branch with which I had trudged up the Brocken, to free myself of the intruders without getting into a personal brawl. Considerably

stung, as daylight showed their faces to be, by the random strokes necessary to my deliverance, the pair stumbled out as incoherently as they had tumbled in; and at half-past one in the morning, after some hours of irritating exercise (for to this does the endurance of such brutal and violent noise amount), I was at liberty to sleep as well as I could, on the fact that I had no idea of the meaning of the word "*tapage*" till I passed the night on the Brocken in the midst of a rout of Göttingen students.

CHAPTER II.

RÜBELAND.

Morning on the Brocken—Impenetrable atmosphere—Sunrise—Picturesque mountain-walk to Schiercke—Drive from Schiercke to Elbingerode—Church tower—A fantasy on forms—Frightful road—Rübeland—Its delicacies and its shows—The Baumanshöhle—Travelling parties—The grotto—Music underground—Illuminations—Echo—Triumphal march—The dinner; the reckoning after it—Absurd predicament—North German goodwill—Unsuspiciousness and art—*Mrs. Grundy* not among the amateurs—Drive from Rübeland to Blankenburg—Road inspector—Blankenburg.

DURING the three hours of sleep allowed me, old remembrances and new impressions combined themselves into such a whimsically distinct mosaic, that the transcript of the same would possibly not be the dullest page of these journals. But, according to Dr. Watts, the telling of dreams is the sluggard's occupation, and in the Harz country at least few deserve

that character. At five o'clock the inmates of the Brockenhaus were all shaken out of their heavy sleep, to be in time for the far-famed sunrise. One by one the spirits of the last night's orgie made their appearance, looking neither much dirtier nor more debauched for the carouse than they had done the previous evening, and alertly eager for the spectacle they had mounted to see. It was soon evident, however, that of this they were to be disappointed. The aspect of matters on issuing forth reminded me of a graphic expression in Mr. Monck Mason's account of the ascent of the great Nassau balloon, which he described as at midnight silently cleaving its way through black marble. No less dense and substantial seemed the dingy white fog in the heart of which the summit of the Brocken was embedded, and which only gave way a span's breadth before us. Having blundered all round the Prospect Tower ere we came to the door of entrance, we mounted to the summit. In vain; the same world was there as below, and the only appearance or sensation which could possibly suggest the idea of its ever being dissipated, was the sudden passage of some detached scarf of mist, which trailed so close to the face as to

make one aware of the neighbourhood of dampness in motion. The strange apparition of hands protruding from no visible bodies, of heads (*such* heads!) without shoulders, and of coat-tails, seemingly to hang self-supported in the air, were presented in the area of a very few feet. All that could be discovered of the progress of dawn was the change in this provoking envelope, from whitish gray to grayish white; and as our watches announced a quarter to six, the dimmest possible tinge in the east, which took a redder glory, when some fold of the mist, parting for an instant, opened out fleecy depths and vistas so interminable as to defy all hope of their ever vanishing. For one little moment, however, as I strained my eyes towards the quarter of promise, the veil was wholly rent, and a brilliant golden eye showed itself, as if to make disappointment greater, by indicating the existence of no ordinary splendour; but, in another instant, down and round and over us on every side, swept the all-covering envelope; and the sun was seen no more. An hour was spent in vain expectation, until the very landlord of the Brockenhaus, more conscientious than some of his calling, announced

that it was clearly a waste of time for any one to linger there longer, the show being postponed till another day! Such postponements, he added, fell to the lot of five travellers out of every six who hoped to assist at the far-famed sunrise from the Brocken.

The bill for night's lodging, supper, cup of morning coffee, and the refreshment of my old guide, was somewhere under the amount of four shillings; an apology being affixed to the bill for the dearness of the charges, owing to the necessity of all provisions being carried up to the hill-top from a very great distance. This mighty sum discharged, the next step was to Schiercke, where Carl and his carriage were waiting; so, leaving behind the rout of *bürschen*, busily resuming their staves and their knapsacks, I set forth, with a boy to carry my wallet. The scramble down the Brocken was far more striking than the ascent had been. It was this way that *Faust* and *Mephistopheles* mounted; and the masses of rock which stared out from among the larch-trees on either side of the rough path —many of them in their winding-sheets of mist, looking as grim and chill as Lapland idols —were huge in size, and fantastic in their forms,

though still not to compare with the fragments which lie about and overhang the Elbe, in Saxon Switzerland. Some of the pine-trees have been able to grow to a superb height and bulk, from their not shouldering each other so closely as on the other side of the mountain. That morning, too, the underwood was so netted over with gossamer, as almost to lose every form of foliage: and, as we stepped down from boulder to boulder—my guide keeping the cold out by his pipe—through the wet and cottony atmosphere which still formed round us an impervious screen, our rapid and silent progress had far more the air of a journey through a land of enchantment than any part of the previous day's walk. It was eight o'clock when we reached Schiercke, a miserable little village. There I dismissed my guide; and, candied over with hoar-frost during my descent, rejoined the vehicle and its Jehu.

The road we took is by the side of the Bode, a cheerful and tumultuous mountain-brook, overhung in places by fine wooded banks, and not brawling so loudly as to drown the pleasant and lulling tinkle of the cow and sheep bells, which produces an effect not unlike a

harp prelude on the upper strings. The influence of this was hardly to be resisted; and it was more asleep than awake that I drove on for the next hour and a half, till jolted beyond all power of rest or day-dreaming, as we neared Elbingerode. The round to which *Tony Lumpkin* treated *Mrs. Hardcastle*, was a bowling-green compared with the road as it enters and issues from that large, naked, bleak-looking village. Of this, I remember little beyond a severe-looking, square, lumpish church, — its tower crowned with that Saracenic black cap, which seems in the Harz district as inevitably the finish for all buildings of which chance has been the architect, as the extinguisher is everywhere in France. Somewhere or other I have encountered a speculation upon nationality of form and style carried through all the arts; showing, for instance, how *point* (without play upon the words) and neatness characterize alike French poetry, and painting, and costume, and architecture, and take the form of rhythm in French music: how a richer and sweeter harmony pervades all the creations of the South; and is to be felt in the expression of the Florentine painters, and the colour of the Vene-

tians—in the delicious measures of Italian versifiers, and in the whole tissue, whether popular or scientific, of Italian music. As I lay back in the hay-strewn stable-yard of the little tavern at Elbingerode, at once kept awake and lulled by the chime of a quartett of flails, while my trusty driver stopped to rest his horses after the last dislocating half-hour, the recurrence of this terminal form in so many of the less-pretending buildings of North Germany, recalled to me the, perhaps, wire-drawn fancy I have journalized; and I puzzled myself in vain, unable to hit upon any one word which should indicate the genuine and distinctive peculiarities of German, as distinguished from French and Italian art and fancy. On some one such unbroken thread, I am persuaded, do the poetry, the painting, and the music of every country lie more closely side by side than their separate historians have taken the trouble to conceive; and he who could analyze the texture, and trace the direction of the support and link proper to each race and country, would perform a service of no common interest and value. The most superficial thinker upon the spirit, rather than the technicalities of art, cannot penetrate a

hair's depth beneath the surface without being lured on and tantalized by indications of central originating causes, which remain unchanged through the revolutions wrought by time upon the outer world. It were a life's labour to follow out and combine these; and largely must the labourer be endowed with the divining rod of fancy, as well as with the mining tools and the line and the plummet of reason; but the labour is worth the pains.

Thus, letting imagination take the tower of Elbingerode church as text for what is possibly but a dream, the half-hour allotted to baiting was soon over. By this time the sun was very warm, and, provokingly enough, as we receded from the Brocken, the mist slowly dissipated, till the summit became as clear as it had shone when luring me to climb it while I drove along the road to Halberstadt. To extricate a pair of wheels and a pair of horses from Elbingerode, is nothing short of a feat. Such a tract, indeed, I never passed over, save once, in a rough scrambling drive to shooting quarters, among the hills of Glamorganshire. Shortly after issuing from the little town, the road leaves the plain, and again joining the Bode,

runs along the side of a valley, till, in the cleft which the stream has formed between gray and picturesques rocks, not unlike those in Middleton Dale, Derbyshire, the little village of Rübeland is seen — a clean, warm, cheerful-looking haunt of comfort and refreshment, particularly agreeable to reach at noon-tide, after a scanty breakfast, taken at the unnatural hour of five A. M., and seven hours of exposure to the most bracing air a man can breathe.

My driver's face, it was easy to perceive, was popular in those parts; for the landlord of the "Golden Lion"—in shape and visage the very model of an English tailor—bustled to and fro on the appearance of Carl Alhelm's shabby vehicle, with an alacrity which nothing short of two coaches and four would command in England. I should have a capital dinner, he declared—trout of course (the trout of the Harz is capital), and a bottle of his best wine; and, while my dinner was getting ready, of course I would see the Baumanshöhle, the most interesting of the grottoes which make Rübeland a notorious station. I assented: then, of course too, I would have extra lights, to show the grotto to its best advantage; and music in

it too? When one is not particularly anxious or interested in the matter, or in that moody and meditative humour which makes one splenetic or intolerant, it is good wisdom to let guides and *ciceroni* take their own way. The *taxe*, too, for all these luxuries and entertainments, was but a trifle; so the trout was to be put in the pan, and the Marcobrunner in the Bode, and the village rummaged for its band—some twenty men in number.

Before they could be collected, two other parties arrived at Rübeland, and made haste to avail themselves of the opportunity to see the Höhle in its court dress. We mounted the steep bank at the back of the inn, each with a *kittel*, or smock frock of black glazed calico, on his arm, and were presently at the mouth of the cave. Under cover of this were waiting the musicians bespoken for my first and only benefit concert,—a set of good-humoured manly-looking fellows, a good deal besmirched with the labours of the forge and the mine. As they lay about among their cornets, trombones, and other brass instruments, some in shade, some in shine,—they made a capital painter's study of "wayfarers at the mouth of a cavern." I

was much amused with one of the parties of grotto-seekers who were to bear me company. This was a gentleman with two ladies, not very young, odd-looking, and curiously tidy. The gentleman turned up his pantaloons, to be out of danger from the drippings of the stalactites which were to be found on the floor of the cave; the lady bound a handkerchief over her cap, with as anxious a precision as if it had been a *fazzoletto* for a fancy ball. It was not this, however, that so much struck me, as the curiosity, earnest to rapacity, evidenced in all the three faces, which told a pleasant tale of powers of enjoyment, retained in all their freshness, and of credulity willing to believe every thing at a moment's word and warning. They were the most incessant talkers, too, I ever encountered; and from the moment when their carriage stopped at the door of the "Golden Lion," till the moment when mine drove away from it, the time of dinner inclusive, a continuous trio of two *soprani* and one baritone was never out of my ears for one solitary moment. Of the other three I have more to say presently.

After a few moments, our musicians, in

single file, dropped one by one into the hole, down which too we were to vanish. Then each of us, bearing his little tin lamp, began to pick his way down a steep and broken descent, into the bowels of the earth, with that stumbling caution, which is always laid aside some two minutes after daylight is fairly left. I am not going to course the reader through the wonders of the grotto, — the Organ, and the Lion's Head, and the Bust, and the Skeleton Hand,— which Nature and Imagination never fail between them to carve out in all such situations. The awe and mystery of the spot were entirely dissipated by the enthusiastic "*Ach!*" and "*Himmel!*" and "*Wunderhübsch!*" of my companions; and when, upon the principal guide whistling a signal, a cross of light revealed itself in the distance, and the Rübelanders struck up a Prussian march and quick step (one of those things the sight of which in an old music book transports the mind back to such strangely different times), their screams of rapture very nearly hindered me from profiting by the music. Fatiguing as is such violent admiration, it is more tolerable than sulkiness or apathy; and as the solemnities of Nature

were out of reach, it was as well to content one's self with the whimsicalities of man.

The music produced a fair effect. In another mood, I should have wished for less lively and common-place strains, in the midst of all those dimly seen and quaintly writhen rock figures; I should have bespoken the "Amplius," or "Confitebor," written by Beethoven for brass instruments alone, and performed at his own funeral. Yet perhaps there might have been less difference between the reverberations of a Strauss melody, and one of those dark and pompous burial strains, thus heard, than would have been felt in the aisles of a cathedral, or the saloons of a palace. The best got-up scene is often disappointing in effect, when Nature is one of the elements.

The last exhibition in the Baumanshöhle was the burning of sundry blue lights, which diffused a strange and infernal glare throughout the vault, bringing all its darkest nooks and recesses into full notice, and making it a fit scene for the demon court of *Ahrimanes* and the resuscitation of *Astarte* in "Manfred." I never, till I returned to upper earth, knew the full value of "the light of common day."

By this time we were all desperately hungry, and the provisions of mine host of the "Golden Lion" recurred to me most comfortably. One other wonder of Rübeland remained. A most articulate and pertinacious echo inhabits the crags on the side of the Bode, opposite to the Baumanshöhle; and as we walked down from the grotto, the men of Rübeland formed before us in procession, playing marches and *galoppes* as they went—the voice from the hill mocking them all the way. In such state we arrived at the little inn, where Boniface, thinking to make a sulky Englishman comfortable according to his own liking, and turning a deaf ear to all my sociable inclinations, handed me off to a little clean bed-room, glaring with sunlight, and there set before me the promised treat. I could not help thinking I was dining after the fashion of the monarch in "the Song of Sixpence," when, by way of a last indulgence, the village band ranged itself round the window, and gave one more hearty flourish of their trumpets—"an appeal," thought I, "to the long purse which my countrymen are presumed to carry." So availing myself of the interval between the trout and the eternal roast veal

of a German dinner, I opened the window, determined for once in my life to make myself popular by an act of munificence.

Out came my purse—out came its contents; when, at that moment, a conviction in which I know not whether dismay or diversion predominated, flashed on my mind. I had left a good half of the *thalers* apportioned for my Harz journey of three days, with my heavy baggage, at Halberstadt; and if I paid for my banquet and my band with the most laudable attention to economy, it stared me in the face that I should then have some twenty *groschen*, and no more, left for the remainder of my tour. The thorough absurdity of such a falling-short after such an extra regale was all but irresistible; but it was vexatious, owing to carelessness, to be compelled to stint the good-humoured musicians of Rübeland: and some will comprehend the feelings of relief with which I saw the last of them disappear, slowly, and, I dare say, disappointed. Then came a moment's brown study; and, but for the summons of the landlord, who, armed with a dish of plum jelly, recommended me to turn and finish my roast meat while it was hot, I might have leaned out

into the still, sunshiny village street, pondering ways and means for the rest of the afternoon.

Pondering, however, would do no good: the fact was clear that my money was all but done, and only half of my Harz round accomplished. I called my driver, and interrogated him as to the possibility of his delivering me that night at the "Prince Eugene." His horses would not do it, he said, and he could not in conscience take me home without my having seen the most beautiful thing in the Harz—the Ross-trappe. In truth, the brilliancy of the weather, and the rarity of such an excursion, made the thoughts of abridging my first plan thoroughly distasteful. So I sent away my dinner, paid my bill, again counted over my *groschen*, and again leaned out of the window in search of an idea. Some money was to be raised, it was clear; but from whom?

A laugh, in six parts, with a brisk *obbligato* accompaniment of knives and forks, from the sociable party in the parlour, determined me. I resolved to try what the compassion of my fellow grotto-hunters would do. As I stood with the handle of the door betwixt the rooms in my hand, a hundred tales of the frolics of

impudent travelling Englishmen came back to me, and I caught a glimpse in the glass of a person too thoroughly disreputable-looking, by reason of early rising, exposure to the air, and the climbing of muddy ladders, to stand any chance of being believed or assisted; even if he could keep down the strong sense of diversion, which the contrast between the parade before and the petition after dinner excited. A moment more, and I should have lost command of my gravity. So I threw open the door, and, by the aid of the better French than my own of a lady of the party, managed to make my difficulty known. Before my tale was half ended, before I could unfold my passport, or a single authentication to encourage the benevolent, or to explain where I came from and whither I was going, every purse and pocket-book was out on the table; every one was pressing offers of service upon me with a wholesale liberality which it warms the heart to remember; and so earnestly, as well as unanimously, that I had to raise my voice to the highest pitch to give my name and address in Berlin. No one would look at a single corroboratory document, and I might have levied contribu-

to any amount. Of course I preferred aid from those belonging to the place of my immediate destination; and having helped myself as moderately as possible out of their store, we shook hands and parted, in the midst of a peal of merriment and mutual good wishes, which are already like things in a dream. I might have spared the egotism of this little adventure, did I not hope that an expression of hearty gratitude might, by some freak of chance, haply meet the eye of those who rendered me such essential service; and were not this timely aid, given to an utter stranger at a moment's warning, too closely illustrative of the unsuspecting cheerfulness and courtesy which, in 1839, seemed distinctive of the intercourse of Germans with the stranger and pilgrim, to be omitted from a chapter in which manners as well as music are sketched.*

* It goes to the heart, on re-issuing the pages of a journal that record such cordial and hearty kindness, to add,—as I must do—that, before 1848, the cheerfulness and courtesy seemed fading out of Germany,—to have retired more and more into remote places,—to have been more and more exchanged for embittered soreness or chill reserve, so far as the Englishman was concerned. The bad manners of our summer tourists—male and female—their exactions, want of sympathy, and want of civility, have had much to do with this darkening of the sun-

The health and prosperity, indeed, of the best music of Germany—that of combination—was largely owing to that very friendly unsuspiciousness which allowed me to be so seasonably helped, and which manifested itself in a freedom and ease of intercourse between the sexes, bearing upon the art with direct and important influences. *Mrs. Grundy* was rarely heard of among the young ladies and young gentlemen of the country, however pertinaciously they chose to sing choruses together, or practise the harmony-music of instruments. As a friend of mine remarked, when adverting to the hindrance which manners, as well as artificial refinements, presented in 1839 to a full and hearty combination of the amateurs of England or France, "The obstacle in both countries is the difficulty your ladies find in moving alone without servants, gentlemen, and other accompaniments *obbligato*. Yet this is almost indispensable to such an undertaking, unless it

shine;—but, more, the creeping canker of ill-reasoned political discontent—on the one hand exacerbated by class-folly and class-prejudice among the rulers, on the other by the unprincipled selfishness of popular leaders. How all the *humour* (in the wide sense of the word) that once gave such relish and individuality to the art of Germany, has dwindled among its people, I have again and again sadly had cause to experience, since the above notes were first published.—1853.

be confined entirely to the inferior classes. Now our damsels, even at night, if there are three or four of them, and an old spinster in the rear, will roam about and fear nothing; or the singing gentlemen will accompany them home; at the bare idea of which every Frenchman's morals would go into fits." There is something in this worthy of honest attention. We cannot, perhaps, return on our track so as to assume a more primitive form of manners; and no audacity is so unbridled, no affectation so pernicious, as the courage and the artlessness of an acted simplicity. The uneasy shame of the first adult English waltzers was a more dangerous profligacy than the unconscious effrontery of many a professional *danseuse*, who has been trained to her exhibitions from her cradle. While exciting our energies for the diffusion of Music, as a desirable and attainable household guest, we shall labour in vain till something is done towards rendering it independent of all cumber, and formality, and expense; to make it a thing of daily love and custom, and not of show. We have better voices than the Germans, and a fair musical organization; but the scientific training of patient study is not less wanting among us

than the social support of a system of manners which shall give room to the art to move easily; and, by detaching it from an exclusive association with paid and public exhibitions, deliver it from the undistinguishing ban under which intellect and morality have so unfairly placed it.*

I saw nothing more beautiful in the Harz country than my drive from Rübeland to Blankenburg. The weather continued genial and cloudless, and the instance of goodwill I have recorded was surely enough to make the dullest of spirits sunshiny. Thus, let no one take my word for it, that Bodenthal is the most beautiful of villages; niched though it be beneath high crags dotted with pine-trees, and with its group of marble works, which have availed themselves of the "water privilege," to stand for the never-omitted water-mill of our landscape painters. But such it seemed.—Nor dare I aver that the hilly miles from Bodenthal to Blankenburg, undulating between warm sloping meadows, covered with noble oaks, whose lower branches sweep the ground, are a richer passage of coun-

* The change which has passed over these matters in England, since the above was written, makes it necessary to again remind the reader, that it is a record of past times.—1853.

try than could be found on many a mail-road in England—say the valley of the Severn. Yet, as Blankenburg is approached, and the country opens, I thought I had never seen view so beautiful—the heavy and quaint-looking castle of the town laid along rather than seated on a knoll above it, and the Regenstein, serving as frames to a wide reach of country. As we were driving from Hüttenrode, the way was blocked up by a heavy wain, loaden with sweet and fresh hay. From the back of this a man jumped out—in face, voice, and dress, the very double of the Ettrick Shepherd—and offered Carl an armful of provender for his horses in return for a ride and a little good company. He was the inspector of the roads in the district, and, getting up beside my Jehu, began, at a noisy rate, to do his part in making me feel at home, by telling me all the news "of the country side." I tried my best to catechise him about the meeting of the *Liedertafeln* societies of the district, which only shortly before had taken place at Blankenburg; but as I did not understand one word in ten he said, of course what he answered was not worth journalizing. He had plenty to tell me on that subject, however, as well as about the excellence

of the crops, the good condition of Carl's horses, and the roughness of the road. The last was enough to make even a bunch of thistles palatable to the poor fatigued beasts who had dragged us over it; how they must have relished, then, their fresh and fragrant supper! A hundred yards before we entered Blankenburg, he leaped from the box, and disappeared among a gang of men at work, with a promise that I should find a good supper, a good bed, and a good host, at the "Weisse Adler." His promise was fulfilled to the letter; and is so, I trust, for the comfort of all travellers, even unto this day.

CHAPTER III.

THE ROSS-TRAPPE.

Blankenburg to Thale—Blech-hütte—One-eyed guide—The ascent—Garland weavers—Harper on the hill—Echo and pistol-shooting—The summit—The Bode-kessel—The descent—A travelling group—A solitary painter—A wood scramble—Conclusion.

PERHAPS I ought to stop at Blankenburg, having no pretensions to draw out an itinerary of the Harz, and few adventures during my third and last day's ramble to report, which touch either music or manners. But it is difficult to break off in a journal full of those pleasant remembrances that light up the fogs of a wintry spring, and fill a dingy street-prospect with

"A mountain ascending, a vision of trees."—

A little jaded, and very unwilling to move, I was driven out of Blankenburg at half-past seven

in the morning. Carl would fain have tempted me up to the platform on which the *Schloss* is built, to take a look at the prospect, and an observation of the building, whose greatest attraction, in my eyes, was its possession, beyond all doubt, of the old original *White Lady*, or Household Demon (cousin-german to the Irish *Benshee*), whose appearance denotes that a death is sure to take place. But I recollected that the palace at Berlin has another *White Lady* equally authentic, and that few spirits of any colour are ever abroad in the morning air. I had seen, moreover, the best of the view on the previous evening; so I sat still, and we drove on.

From Blankenburg, the road, which is wretched, becomes more and more insipid, the *bergs* keeping in the back-ground, till it suddenly turns in among them at Thale, and crosses the Bode, over a wide bed of blanched stones, among which the stream soaks. The "water privilege" is here employed in the service of iron works; and just ere reaching the village belonging to these, which is well nigh as black and grim with charcoal dust as if it stood on the spur of the Yorkshire hills, a one-eyed lad, in face and figure a perfect *Flibbertigibbet*, fastened

upon us. This was to be my guide to the Rosstrappe. Never had any one more completely the true hackney tone and hackney slouch of the fraternity, and it was lucky for my undisturbed meditations that he sucked away so constantly at his pipe as only to be able to give out his legends and other information in scraps between the whiffs. A rough plank bridge crosses the bright and busy Bode; and in a few minutes more the path begins to lose itself among trees, and to mount so steeply, that one seems to ascend by stories rather than a more gradual acclivity. It was easy to gather that this was the great lion of the Harz, from the number of the temptations thrown in the way of the visitor. Scarcely were we in the wood, than a pretty child ran after us, with a nicely knit garland of oak leaves, which she threw over my shoulders; and by the number of dead ones which strewed the path, it would seem as if the trade was a brisk one. There are many artificial stations for rest as the hill is mounted: at Eckart's Höhe, a bare piece of rock jutting out through the trees, where the view over the plain becomes magnificent, and, to my taste, surpassing, because within more manageable compass than, the wider

panorama of the Brocken, the pilgrim is invited to halt to eat and drink at a wayside cottage covered with heather, whose mistress, when I saw it, was a plump pale old *frau*, with as shrewd an eye, and as tidily formal a cap, as if Gerard Douw had just let her out of one of his pictures. Beside her, "at the shieling door," was a faded elderly young person, with that crossed-in-love watering-place look of haggard welcome, which, to my discomfort, threw light on a harp I had seen an instant before under a tree. It was a pity that so lovely a scene should be spoilt by an exhibition; and somehow or other I never felt so intolerant of a favourite instrument as when its owner, laying aside a roomy blue worsted stocking she was knitting for the wearing of her own solid leg, began to tinkle out waltzes, *seguidillas*, and the other tunes one associates so naturally with all that is most squalid in musical itinerancy, and all that is stalest in town life; with dancing dogs and blind men, the scarlet tin tray with its rattling coppers, and the parades of Cheltenham! Those worn-out scraps of ball-room and ballet music, and the unmeaning mechanical smile with which my *groschen* were acknowledged, put a *bad taste* into

my mind as I mounted a story higher. As we came nearer the summit there was more show-work to be gone through; but this was impressive rather than otherwise. A smart round of pistol-shooting was going on, the echoes of which rolled away in muttered thunder among the rocks, like the sound of the bowlers whom *Rip Van Winkle* saw in *Sleepy Hollow*. At last we came out upon the cliff, which we had been now climbing during a hot half-hour.

The Ross-trappe is a bare and splendid piece of rock, challenged from the other side of the narrow rift, through which foams the Bode, by many no less wild and lofty crags,—the Devil's Ballroom, &c. &c.,—and set round with spires, and needles, and strangely balanced lumps of rude stone, thrown about into the most extravagant attitudes, and menacing each other from point to point. On the flattened platform at the top of the cliff where I stood, are two or three large indentations. There is a goodly legend belonging to these, of a Princess Cunigonda, pursued by a ravisher or fiend—perhaps both, and the miraculous leap of a horse, which either saved her or destroyed her rescuer. That I retail this after dear *Mrs.*

Nickleby's fashion is not the fault of my *Flibbertigibbet*—for he shouted it out at the top of his lungs, as loudly as if I had bespoken the tale to try the echo withal, in place of the pistol and the cannon-shooting which is performed for those delighting in sudden noises. But I was looking up the valley of the Bode too busily to heed him;—following the long horizontal lines which seam its grim slanting crags, so thickly feathered with fir-trees, and watching far down in the dark chasm the whirling water, which gleamed among the bushes like a shaken diamond chain, boiling more and more impetuously in proportion as it is near the Bode *kessel*, or spring, where it wells up into daylight. After lingering a long time on the summit, and picking out the town of Quedlinburg, and the eight towers of Halberstadt in the distance, we hurried down a rude path, to the great discomfiture, I fear, of a timid young lady and her party who were ascending. She had taken off her bonnet, so as to display a fine crop of bright orange-coloured hair, and had divested herself of her shawl, and her gingerbread-coloured knit mittens (the product of her own industry doubtless), that neck and bosom and arms might

be dyed to match. Why, by the way, the young ladies of North Germany should affect this unlovely colour, is a point of taste as difficult to account for as the frequent love of a red umbrella among their old men, which must make it a miracle to keep turkey-cocks in a good temper in any German town. Another no less national figure was perched like a bittern at the water's edge far beneath us. His wide straw hat, blue shirt, and carnation-coloured silk neck-handkerchief, setting off his jet-black beard, scarcely made a brighter spot of colour among the sober-hued stones where he had fixed his seat, than the flagrant landscape on which he was at work. There was the old caricature of violet hills and orange trees and China blue water which may be seen on any French paper, drawn out in all its tawdriness, just as confidently as if Nature with all her delicious hues and shades had not been before and around and above her libeller. He was better employed in biting at the long sausage with which his mouth was half full, than in libelling green foliage and gray rocks. Presently he, too, was shut out; and we went over a Devil's Bridge towards the last attainable sta-

tion overlooking the *kessel*, or caldron. There are many scenes of the kind on a grander scale; but I doubt whether I could have been more delighted by a sight of Niagara itself, than by watching the ceaseless brewing and seething of those brilliantly clear waters which have *folded*, not worn, the stone around them, till, in its forms, it takes the easy roundness and play of drapery. It was impossible not to wish to advance beyond the station at which the rude path comes to an end,—an almost perpendicular rock blocking up the valley just above the source of the stream. And accordingly, in spite of *Flibbertigibbet's* remonstrances, I started off on such a scramble through briars, stones, and hazel-bushes, as I have not undertaken since tracking the course of the brooks which, falling into the Lune above Lancaster, run through some of the loveliest rock-scenery in England. All would not do. Vexatious as it is to mortal self-conceit to be circumscribed by those who *lay out* the haunts of Nature to the utmost advantage, after half an hour vainly spent in attempting to obtain a nearer glimpse of the caldron, the roar of which took at last a positively malicious tone, the feat was abandoned as

GLIMPSES OF BERLIN

IN 1839-40.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS—"DER FREISCHÜTZ."

A peep at a fair, and at the Cathedral of Magdeburg—Arrival at Berlin, changed since the days of Burney—First impressions of Berlin—The splendour of its buildings—Musical anticipations—Display at dinner—The afternoon of the Germans—"Der Freischütz" at the *Schauspiel Haus*—The manner of its performance—The cast of the opera—Mademoiselle von Fassmann—Disappointment—The metropolis of criticism—Morning visits in Berlin—Rumours and qualifications—Partizanship—The Fassmann and the Löwe—Voltaire and Burney on the Berlin spirit—*Mrs. Grundy* and *Mrs. Candour*—Absence of form, and absence of sincerity—Scene at a German supper-table.

WITH the exception of the damsel, who stood under the vine-hung porch of the post-house at Egeln, to show the splendid flaxen ringlets which were gathered up at the back of her head

at Genthin, and by a guess or two at the wide and naked splendours of Potsdam, through which the *schnellpost* passed an hour after midnight. One could hardly make a less interesting journey of fourteen hours; and it was with feelings of no common relief that I felt our vehicle slowly rumbling to its full stop somewhere about seven o'clock A. M. in the yard of the post-office, Berlin. From thence to the Hotel de Russie the transfer is short and easy.

Modes of conveyance and usages had changed with a vengeance since the year 1772, when Dr. Burney made the capital of Brandenburg a principal station in his musical pilgrimage. The night before he reached Berlin, he remained, as his own agreeable journal tells us, for seven cold, dark, wet hours, stuck fast in a bog, on a bleak and barren heath, between the last post-house and the city; and on arriving, after having been detained for three-quarters of an hour at the barrier, was conducted, under custody of a sentinel, to the custom-house, to abide another detention of two hours. It would have been only natural, if all his life long he had hated a place of which his first impressions were so repulsive. Thanks to the activity of Herr von

Nagler, roads in 1839 were smooth, and conveyances punctual and commodious. The liberality of the times had reduced the inquisitorial proceedings of the custom-house to a cursory and civil examination on the frontier: there was, then, no excuse for bad humour—call it even by the convenient name of low spirits—on the part of the traveller entering the Prussian metropolis. Yet my first feelings in Berlin were those of depression.

The finest of modern cities is like a beauty in a ball dress, and should never be first seen (let the Wordsworths write what sonnets they will) by the light of very early day. However striking be the repose of that hour, the want of welcome to a stranger, in the total cessation of life and bustle, is chilling to the heart. Bodily weariness, and the reaction after much pleasant excitement, had of course their part, in the first indifferent glance which I cast at the spacious old palace, the arsenal, Schinkel's far-famed museum, and his square flaring *Bau Academie*. The last, built of a dull red brick, and traversed by pin stripes of lilac tiles, introduced on most original principles of concord, reminded me of a huge bale of one of those coarse and

tawdry calicoes which are manufactured for the Mandingoe or Eboe market.

All pre-occupation apart, however, there is a certain coldness in the physiognomy of Berlin which never wholly passes away—morning, noon, or night; a frigid and academical splendour in the new edifices, which makes the eye long for a bit of dingy antiquity. Mine, at last, found a positive delight in resting on the group of corrupt and heavy oriels and bell-towers of the palace, overhanging the water on the side of the Long Bridge. The mathematically straight, wide streets, lined with noble houses, are beautiful; but it is the beauty of a set of regular features without variety of expression, where fancy has nothing to discover. The Linden, of course, is an exception; and there are few things more splendid than that long avenue, closed by the magnificent Brandenburg Gate, with the masses of forest in the Thiergarten beyond, especially when seen by such brilliant and mellow moonlight as shone in September, 1839.

If the Prussian capital, in right of its modern Greek buildings, is the Mecca of many a German architect,—Munich being his Medina—it

had been to me, musically, long a Holy City. While half dozing on my hard sofa, half watching the ceaseless gleaming of the fountain in the Lustgarten, I had dim dreams of Mara and Milder; I remembered that Sontag had burst upon the world of her adorers from Berlin. I had been told before I left England wonderful things of Mademoiselle von Fassmann, who was in 1839 the star of classical opera. I had heard at every table from which I had eaten, since I came into North Germany, of the grace and consummate brilliancy of Mademoiselle Löwe. I anticipated the utmost orchestral and choral perfection, and hoped for "Iphigenia," or "Armida," or "Fidelio," or "La Vestale,"—to say nothing of such good new German operas as might be considered worthy of metropolitan honours. Of course I called for a play-bill with my breakfast; and, in spite of fatigue and indisposition, it was with a leaping-up of delight and expectation that I saw the announcement of "Der Freischütz," to be given that very evening at the Schauspiel Haus, —with the identical Mademoiselle von Fassmann for the *Agatha* of the opera.

The morning was spent in a pleasant hurry

of spirits; in familiarizing the eyes with the principal sights of the city, and in learning how heartily its inhabitants accredit letters of introduction. That day's dinner, too, was amusing: it furnished materials for a scene in an unwritten comedy of "Display." At mine host's right hand sat Herr ——, the singer, calling for champagne betwixt mouthful and mouthful, and boasting of his *bonnes fortunes* with a no less amazing prodigality. There was such an incurable twang of the stage *Leporello*, however, in every word of his gasconade, and in every name he announced, as to make his adventures at every listener's service amusing rather than credible. Perhaps, my entertainment in the bustle he kept up was not lessened from observing how seriously he traversed the intentions of one of my dear countrymen, who was equally resolved to shine, but in another fashion. With him, it was all "my dinner with the Crown Prince;" "the day we spent with the King;" "my breakfast at Count Raczynski's;" and "what I said to him about my own place in ——shire!" Never was greatness thrust upon a guest more willingly shared with the public of the highways and hedges. Never was victim—

like *Mr. Lofty* deprived of a single moment's breathing-time by the importunate claims of the great and the influential—more willing to tarry and (to quote the American who misquoted Mr. Rogers' lyric to the poet himself)—

"*show his tale*
To every passing villager."

Not far off sat a less showy pair of contrasts. One was a middle-aged English gentlewoman; the civilest, most untravelled, most precise of single ladies who ever came to Berlin to place her nephew at school. Sore bested was she with foreign usages, curtseying with a nervous dolefulness of expression when she entered the saloon; mistrusting every dish that was set before her; and, with almost tears in her eyes, recalling the wholesome roast and boiled of her own kitchen, as mess after mess of disguised vegetables passed round (the Teltower turnips, a notable Berlin delicacy, among the rest), or as sweets and savouries were shed on her neighbours' plates in strange admixture. There was a life's training under Chapone and Fordyce in her reserved acceptance of the courtesies of her cavalier and neighbour. He was a blithe, shrewd-faced, loquacious inhabitant of the town, who in very fair

English expatiated upon every use and custom, great and small, of German life and manners, till her poor head, I am sure, must have been utterly bewildered. *Sancho* in *Barataria* had not a worse time of it under the restrictions of his physician, than the victim of my neighbour's civility among the meats and drinks of the Hotel de Russie, which he pressed upon her, in spite of herself; and when, in the midst of an elaborate dissertation upon this and the other Professor's method of teaching (how far from the *Reading-made-easy* studies of her own scholastic experience!), he fairly took the good-natured freedom of jointing the leg of a pheasant on her plate with his own knife, the bewildered gratitude of her wintry smile, and her "Oh, dear sir!" "Thank you, sir!" was almost too much for any by-standing nerves to bear. The repast ended in the gentleman's insisting upon esquiring her to see Seydelmann* in Schiller's "Don Carlos." She was

* To sketch Art in Berlin at all, without mentioning this admirable actor, would be an absurd omission; the more so, since his name is not mentioned, so far as I recollect, by any of the travellers and critics who have done so much to draw English attention to the theatre of modern Germany;—not even by that elegant and thoughtful writer, Mrs. Jameson. When I saw him first, it was in a translation from the French, as *Moliére* the

to be shown everything. No German ever leaves a sight unvisited: and hers was one of the cases in which total ignorance of the language made but little difference. But, from this perplexing civility, the good lady seemed eager to escape, and with the air of one by no means sure that even harder inflictions would not be attempted. I found afterwards that she had a tapestry frame in her own room; and that, like a good work-woman, she had bound herself to complete her task of so many square inches there every day!

The early dinner hour in Germany leaves a

Lover: and the perfection of his style, as regards *finesse*, demeanour, and the power of saying everything while saying nothing in the common conversational tone of society, made me so completely forget the difference of their languages that I wrote—"I would give anything to see him with Mars." His *Philip of Spain* was described to me as no less Spanish than his *Molière* was French. His *Mephistopheles*, again, was thoroughly pandemoniacal. In short, he seemed to me the only German actor, among those I encountered, whom the schooling of attitude, gesture, and diction, to which the theatrical aspirants of the country laudably subject themselves, had led wholly to the desired result—the easy and vivid simulation of Nature, the life-like completeness of the figure, without a stray chisel-mark. I cannot remember a single point made—a single attitude indulged in: but I know that he *was* the being he set himself to personate, and not "Seydelmann" in the part of ——."

Since the above note was written, Herr Seydelmann, like so many of the artists to whom my journals refer, is gone.—1853.

peculiarly profitless chasm of time before the early theatre.—There were sociable coffee visits, to be sure, principally confined to the ladies, which might be paid; or, following a male Berlin fashion, one might drop into Kranzler's, or Stehely's, to toss over the papers and to eat something; but, for a traveller's purposes, the afternoon thus spoiled is next to worthless. Energy itself cannot rummage libraries and look at pictures, when the heaviest meal of the day remains still undigested.—So I sauntered up and down the Linden, which was as vacant of foot-passengers as our own Bond-street of equipages in the month of September; peeped into Asher's to see what English books were most in request—finding, by way of reply, a heap of annuals new-fledged in scarlet and gold—and read the permitted dole of intelligence in the journal of the day, till it was time to be found in my *sperr-sitz* at the Schauspiel-haus. I had been forewarned at dinner that I was not to look for a very grand representation. Many of the singers and half the orchestra were then at Potsdam with the camp, in attendance upon the grand autumnal review; and the opera was therefore given on a small scale in the smaller theatre. Still, to hear "Der Freischütz" in

Germany was something. The sensation made by that work throughout Europe had excited one of my first musical yearnings; and the zeal with which I had in old days trudged after barrel-organs in the streets, to catch up the Hunters' Chorus, and had risen at sunrise to pick out the waltz on the pianoforte, came back like feelings of yesterday. It chanced too, that, save the overture and the great *scena* for the *soprano*—which, after all, is hardly a concert-song—I had never heard any part of the opera decently performed. Therefore, having taken a hasty look round, and satisfied myself that the theatre (another of Schinkel's works) had a grand classical comfortless appearance, in spite of its limited scale; and that the two huge heads of Tragedy and Comedy, set like cameos half the height of the *proscenium* pillars, cut the perpendicular unpleasantly, I composed myself to enjoy the most delicious of all musical prologues to a goblin tale —more than I had ever enjoyed it before.

The overture began: I was at last hearing it played in Berlin style. Numbers may give tone, but they do not surely influence the intelligence of the conductor, communicated to his band. The body of sound, too, was quite full enough

for the size of the theatre. But *was* this Berlin style? Could it be that the quartett of horns in the introduction—music recalling the rich wood-scenery of some of Tieck's *märchen*—was allowed to plod through its work, with only the coarsest lights and shades *rubbed in*, as one says of a painter's sketch? Were my ears, or they, out of tune? I thought of Herr von Raumer's dictatorial demolition of our London music, and of the sneers lavished by him in his English and Italian journals on all performances save Berlin performances—on all singers save Berlin singers—drew my breath, and listened again. It was past doubt; the horns *were* lazy and false. Greater disappointment I have not often felt; nor was the rest of the composition wrought up in a manner to reassure me: the close, in particular, wanted firmness and animation. One does not go to Germany to hear people *play together*; and to say that the overture went correctly is tantamount to praising the Lancashire chorus singers for going through the "Hallelujah" of the "Messiah" without utterly breaking down. So largely, however, did I distrust my own impressions, that, had I not afterwards enjoyed the realization of my

beau idéal of German instrumental performance to the fullest completeness, and had had many opportunities of confirming my judgment of the Berlin orchestra, I should have torn this page from my journal.

Yes, not only was the tone of the band fatigued, rather than crisp or mellow; its execution was characterless and slovenly. Up went the handsome green curtain, with its classical devices, and the business of the stage began. The hero of the opera was Herr Eichberger; the *Caspar*, Herr Blum; the *Kilian*, Herr Mantius—the last, highest in rank among the singers; yet, according to the sensible statutes of German management, taking a secondary part, and doing his best with it, without apparent condescension or reluctance.* Himself excepted, there was not a *solo* singer on the stage who did not sing with an impaired or inferior organ. Finish of style there was none;

* A friend of mine encountered *die grosse* Schröder (so the Germans delighted to call their Siddons) behind the scenes of the theatre, one evening when "Romeo and Juliet" was to be given. She was dressed for her part. "How?" exclaimed he, in true English surprise. "*You* going to play '*Lady Capulet?*'" "I think it an honour," was her simple answer—the answer of a true artist.

nor those traces of vocalization which give the most wretched Italian artist a certain air, and a certain hold on the attention; and yet where has style a fairer opportunity for display—where a well-trained voice—than in the two *cantabiles* which relieve the great tenor *scena?* Blum's *Caspar* was rough and hearty—a touch too broad in its buffoonery; and this was all the more strongly obvious from the generally careless and somnolent tone of the performance. The enthusiasm of hope did not, however, quite forsake me till the second act had brought forward the favourite of the Berlin classicists, whose attitudes the sculptor Rauch used to send his pupils into the theatre to study. Let every one distrust a singer who is described by her attitudes; nay, and even an actress; for a succession of skilful arrangements of figure and drapery surely as little makes a personification as a collection of descriptive passages in verse constitutes a drama. But I had been too often provoked by the indifference of our vocalists to everything save the show-off of the crude natural voice, to make just then the due distinction. On the stage, Mademoiselle von Fassmann was a magnificent *blonde;* and when she wore her hair

arranged in rich Vandyke ringlets on either side of her face, seldom has a *blonde* presented a more effective appearance. Her voice must have been a powerful *soprano*, the natural toughness of which had never been wrought out of it by practice. In all passages of the least volubility she was totally inaudible, or so languidly heavy as to destroy every idea of time; but the purity and truth of her organ were gone; its middle tones were false; its high notes, when forced, were thick and harsh. It seemed as if in all passages of excitement or animation, her physical powers became utterly extinct; and though her postures were separately graceful and picturesque, I could not but feel the total want of that electric warmth which would have made even an awkwardness welcome for the sake of a sudden burst of feeling. Musically speaking, her performance was bad; dramatically it was elaborate and wearisome. The *Annchen*, Dlle. Galafres, was beneath dispraise. The audience was scanty and (no wonder!) sluggish.

I was as much puzzled as disappointed. Sedulousness and care in performance had been, till then, believed in by me as an integral part of the musical creed of Germany. It could not be

because "Der Freischütz" was a familiar work, and belonging to a class the interest of which must exhaust itself in a limited period, that the orchestra played so disregardfully, and that the singers were so far behind the Brunswick corps in spirit and unity of purpose. Nor was it fair to my own star to believe I had stumbled on the worst night of the season. All that I afterwards heard and observed in Berlin — all that I have since learned concerning its in-comings and out-goings—furnished me with an explanation of my disappointment, which, right or wrong, comes too strongly before me not to be stated.

Berlin is notoriously the city of criticism—one must not say of pretension, seeing that a Zelter presided over its music—a Rahel (Madame Varnhagen von Ense) has adorned its social circles—and such professors as a Waagen have been charged with the care and classification of its works of art. But when a critical spirit, from analyzing facts and principles, condescends to the care of persons and events, temper and pique are apt to have something to say as well as judgment. So kindly do the inhabitants welcome strangers; so delightful (in spite of

its touch of precision) is the tone of their society —intellectual without ostentation—that I cannot but wish they were kinder to each other. To pay a round of visits in 1839 was like dancing the egg-dance, where at every step you are in danger of breaking a shell, and leaving a stain. If I asked, with a natural interest, about Madame von Arnim, whose published correspondence with Goëthe gives her a claim to be numbered among the distinguished women of her country, a dozen voices made haste to assure me that her letters were no "Letters of a Child," and attacked her reputation with that weapon most odious to woman—a calendar of dates! Who ever thanked the Quarterly reviewer for disinterring the "Lynn register" that destroyed our belief in the early authorship of the delightful "Evelina?" If I praised the hospitable attentions of ——, I was chilled by a direct "You go there? It is a hollow house." If I inquired in one quarter for Mendelssohn's music, a dry, "Yes, he had talent as a boy," discouraged a second question.—If I desired to know, in a second, which of Marschner's works were most in favour, "They perform none here," was the certain answer, and as certain a

prelude to some story of cabal and quarrel, which it fatigued the heart to hear. If I wished to be told, in a third, what M. Leon de St. Lubin, who had been a resident in Berlin, had done besides a pianoforte *trio* in G minor, and a quintett for stringed instruments, the knowledge of which made me desire to increase my acquaintance with his music, I got, in return, the fact that he had played terribly out of tune when appearing at Leipsic as candidate for the leadership then enjoyed and adorned by Herr David,—but nothing more.* In every play-going house there was an earnest partizan for Mademoiselle Löwe, or for Mademoiselle von Fassmann. Of this I had a curious proof one evening, when a German translation of Herold's "Pré aux Clercs" was performed, in which the rival queens appeared. The score (how could composer be so thoughtless?) makes their *entrati* succeed each other without pause. First came the Fassmann, attired as the *Queen of France*, in a splendid hunting costume of green velvet. She

* Since my return, I have stumbled upon the titles of two operas, "Die Goldene Fisch" and "Kornblümchen," by this composer. It is vexatious that, even in Germany, one should know so many modern operas, belonging to names of promise, only by their titles.—1839.

laboured through her song, in a manner which showed, beyond mistake, that French music was not within her circle of possibilities. Scarcely had she finished, and received her round of applause from the classical party—applause almost insulting, after the positive demerit of her performance—when forth sailed the Löwe, in all the magnificence of her fine figure, brilliant arch black eyes, and captivating smile, most wonderfully dressed. Ere she could open her mouth—which, by the way, was usually in the first instance to utter some musical falsity—an uproar of welcome broke from the French, or fashionable party, which seemed to make her eyes sparkle brighter, and her form dilate to a nobler height. The Fassmann pressed her hand to her heart, gasped, turned red through her stage rouge, and did all but burst into tears. We heard the preliminary sob; this she swallowed down; but for the rest of the evening she was inaudible. "Was ever anything like the rage she is in?" cried one of the Löwe's adorers, whose *sperr-sitz* was next to mine. "Delicious!"

This theatrical feud was not the only public evidence I witnessed during my transient glimpse

of Berlin, in 1839, which appeared to indicate that the world both of art and society there was traversed by a network of coterie influences, partizanships, objections, and reserves, so wide-spreading, as well as deep-rooted, as painfully to strike even a bird of passage.—Nor is such character a new one. "Musical controversies in Berlin," says Burney, "have been carried on with more heat and animosity than elsewhere; indeed there are more critics and theorists in this city than practitioners, which has not, perhaps, either refined the taste or fed the fancy of the performers." Earlier even than the date of Burney's visit, "Berlin," writes Voltaire, to Madame Denis, in the same letter which vaunts the beauties of the Opera House, and the noble execution of "Iphigenie en Aulide,"—"Berlin est un petit Paris. Il y a de la médisance, de la tracasserie, des jalousies d'auteurs, et jusqu'à des brochures." Times have changed proportions, I fancy; for I must add, that a reasonably intimate acquaintance with the musical circles of the French metropolis has not revealed the same amount of artistic disunion and vexation of spirit, that three weeks of casual and superficial observation in 1839 disclosed to me in Berlin.

A worse atmosphere for Art than this could not be imagined by its most malicious enemy. What avails putting *Mrs. Grundy* to the door, and opening it to *Mrs. Candour?* What avail freedom of motion, superior ease and familiarity in social intercourse, if a scandalizing spirit be allowed to creep in, and if those who think the most deeply upon Art feel the most meanly concerning its petty precedences and honours,—for are not all precedences and honours petty when compared with the indwelling consciousness of being gifted for high things,—which is the only safe motive and sure solace of the artist? It will not do to dismiss the case with coarse and shallow sneers on the differences—

"'Twixt tweedledum and tweedledee."—

A squabble between a pair of common crowders, who care no more for their calling than its ministering to them a certain amount of gin-and-water, may be thus disposed of; but not a disease which paralyzes the energies of an eager and intelligent population like that of Berlin. I was talking on the subject with one of the most accomplished and acute observers I have known,—a German too,—and remarking how

ill such a spirit of intrigue and evil-speaking in Art suited with the social geniality and absence of form in the manners of his countrymen. In England, I said, where Music had been so long disproportionately considered a mere means of money-getting, one might, indeed, have looked for such narrowness of view; and yet I had never observed any thing at home in degree analogous to this. "No," was the simple answer, "it is not so with you in England; your very forms of society prevent it. Here, the universal necessity of their being laid aside, by every one who wishes to be thought a good neighbour, sometimes brings on hypocrisy; professions of regard and heartiness which are not felt;—and then, the comfort of raising the mask afterwards!"

I have had not a few visible demonstrations of the truth of this remark. One in particular occurs to me—the scene of which was a supper-table at the principal hotel of no matter what Prussian town. The arrival of two of the most distinguished musicians in Europe was sure to be noised abroad in a few seconds; and, ere the soup was gone, a professional of the place made his appearance. Lean, bilious, conceited;—in

an agony to look affectionate and to talk cleverly, dressed with a sort of pedagogic neatness—now he kissed one of the party—now he lavished splendid words and compliments on the other—hung on the words of both, and, with bowed head and clasped hands, received their news as oracles. *Damon* was not more enchanted to embrace *Pythias* than he seemed to be.—This man had *only* stigmatized one of the two in print as presumptuous in his art; and on a public musical occasion been overruled by the other for a like fault!

But the comedy was not done. Enter next my old friend, the identical *Leporello* of the Hotel de Russie, in a fuller bloom of success among the fair than ever. Enter, too, ——, about whose merits as an instrumentalist so much has been said and written. The two had been giving concerts together. More sweet words from *Herr* Professor ——; more extravagant compliments to the last new-comers; more bland smiles at their great-boy play with each other, which had the desired effect of drawing the attention of the rest of the company upon them. Surely, if Charity lived anywhere on earth, it was in that good man's breast! The

concert-giving pair rose to go. They were not upon the threshold when their panegyrist laid his lean hand eagerly upon ——'s shoulder, with a quick hungry look, which would set up *Sir Benjamin Backbite*, and leave something to spare for *Snake*, as he exclaimed, in a loud whisper,—"Well, well, my dear friend, *you* cannot like his playing, I am sure! Do tell me!"

If the artistic intercourse of Germany be crossed by frequent veins of insincerity like this, it accounts for many of the short-comings and deficiencies which, in the theatrical arrangements of musical Germany, for a while so entirely puzzled me, as occurring among a people at once so friendly in manner and so devoted to Art. I could give other anecdotes, derived from my own personal experience, not less illustrative of the truth of my German friend's remark; but a single instance is enough —the smile they raise is one of bitterness. Beyond any general causes of disunion or egotism, there were particular conditions in the history of Berlin Opera, which, I think, tended to bring about the state of unsatisfactory decadence in which I found it.

CHAPTER II.

THE COURT AND THE OPERA.

The Opera House at Berlin—Voltaire's correspondence with Paris—Frederic the Great a patron of art; a despot over art—Burney's glimpses of the Berlin opera—Madame Mara—Zelter's anecdotes of her—Genius and despotism—Frederic the Great's taste in music—Royal patronage—German opera hardly formed in the days of Frederic—The national theatre—German singers—Madame Milder; a short sketch of her—Her popularity in Berlin—Her traditions maintained there to this day—Madame Schröder Devrient—Hoffmann's "Undine"—A word on the legend—Spontini and Zelter; the latter criticises the former—The appearance of "Der Freischütz"—Melody and elephants—The result of Weber's successes nullified—Gradual deterioration of the Berlin opera—Spontini; his unpopularity—His music—His place among the composers.

THOUGH a more oddly assorted quartett of authorities could hardly be picked out than Voltaire, Dr. Burney, Zelter, and the author of the "Ramble among the Musicians of Germany,"—each of them gives his drachma or his

mite of information to those who sought the causes of the state of Berlin Opera in 1839 in its past history. From the philosopher-courtier, the friend of Johnson and Garrick, the worshipper of Goethe, and the pleasant man of modern art and letters, who mingled in his speculations the Hummels of Germany and the Hunts of *Cockayne* with a graceful and good-humoured individuality, we learn different parts of one and the same history.

But a little way up the Linden Strasse stood the magnificent Opera House, where all the splendours of the *French* musical drama were exhibited under the nominal direction of M. le Chevalier Spontini. Though its interior decorations were faded when I saw it in 1839, it seemed to me the handsomest and best proportioned theatre I ever entered; large without vastness, and having that habitable look which is indispensable to the comfort of a place of public amusement, and, perhaps, unattainable in such a building as the Schauspiel Haus, where classical rigour of style is attempted. This was the identical theatre built by Knobersdorf,* one of

* Destroyed by fire in the year 1844, and since rebuilt on a more magnificent scale.—1853.

the chamberlains of Frederic II., with the grandeur of which, in the first days of Voltaire's sojourn at the Prussian court, he delighted to pique his far-away enemies at Paris. Not a few also of his letters to his "*anges*" the Count and Countess D'Argental, and to Madame Denis, contain allusions to its splendours, among the other glories of Berlin. The tournament of 1750 was pronounced by him to be worthy of the brilliant age of Louis Quatorze* —the opera "Phaeton," to be more magnificently got up than anything in those theatres of Paris which had so strong a hold on the philosopher's affections to his dying day,—the scene of *The Palace of the Sun* being beyond all admiration. Madame Astrua, the *prima donna*, had the best voice in Europe; and the

* "You would find it difficult," writes Voltaire to M. le Comte d'Argental, "on the delivery of Madame la Dauphine, to give a spectacle as noble and as gallant as that in preparation here;—a tournament composed of four numerous *quadrilles* (battalions?) of Carthaginians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans, headed by four princes, who will rival each other in their magnificence, to take place under an illumination of twenty thousand lamps, that will change night into day; the prizes to be delivered by a lovely princess, before a crowd of strangers assembled to witness the spectacle. What is this but the age of Louis Quatorze revived again on the banks of the Spree?"

music was very good. How should it be otherwise, when these pomps and splendours emanated directly from a King, "in every respect like Marcus Aurelius, save that Marcus Aurelius did not make verses, and that his prototype does, and excellent ones, when he gives himself the trouble of correcting them:"—a King (to quote from another *couleur de rose* letter of the same period) "who fights like Cæsar, thinks like Julian, *and gives me an income of twenty thousand livres and honours also, for supping with him!*" Alas! could the last be the reason why Philosophy should extol valour and liberality in his royal pupil and flatterer? It seems so; and shortly afterwards the "*mais*," indicative of a sense of hollowness and dissatisfaction, which would even then creep into Voltaire's letters to Madame Denis, became an exception too potent to admit of his remaining any longer in so brilliant a court, and under so peerless a sovereign. The King had begun to talk of "throwing away the orange as soon as he had squeezed it dry,"—the Mentor was become weary of "washing dirty linen"—so Voltaire contemptuously styled the literary assistance rendered by him to the Marcus Au-

relius, who made verses, and was too royal to correct them. Nine years afterwards he was not ashamed to record his change of note yet more decidedly. The " Mémoires pour servir à la Vie de M. Voltaire" give us the thread ends and the coarse canvas of the tapestry with a vengeance! What availed the splendid Opera House,—its boxes supported by Caryatides,—if the sovereign who built it lorded it there after the fashion of a Tiberius? The panegyrist turned satirist informs us, that the King's favourite *danseuse*, La Barbarini, had been carried off from Venice by his soldiers, though anything but a Helen;—so depraved was the monarch's taste. And we are not told that the *quondam* Julian lavished upon this unworthy fancy a thousand *livres* of salary more than he had accorded to the " orange he had squeezed," and the " washer-*man* of his dirty linen" in the chaste retreats of Sans Souci,—till the bitterness of the reproach had been already secured by an earlier paragraph. For there we read, that this greatest of Kings showed little grace to his ancient favourites;—and only rewarded with a pension of seventy crowns the poor Madame Sbommers, his first love, who had

played the harpsichord to the heir-apparent's flute in his young days, and for her complaisance had been flogged by rough old Fritz, his father! Too much of the weakness of humanity is displayed in these humiliating exhibitions of spleen, to make us wish to linger with them, though they have a value and a bearing as regards the history of Opera in the Prussian metropolis.

Notices, however, yet more directly significant, are to be found concerning it in Dr. Burney's Journals. He visited Berlin, some twenty years after the reign of Voltaire, when the monarch, beginning to be a "little scant of breath," was harassed by the long passages of brilliant execution which Quantz had written to close the *solos* in his flute *concertos*. The historian's musical eyes discerned that Art flourished there in an ungenial fashion. It was bid to hold up its head and step out, in the straight lines of parade and form, just as the King pleased!—Music, in short, was under a military despotism. The King was at the whole expense of the opera; the public being then admitted *gratis;* and at six o'clock in the evening the monarch took his place in the pit, close to the orchestra, behind the *maestro di*

capella, overlooking the score, and rebuking any of the singers who should chance to make a flourish, or change a note in the music. The poor humble vocalists! What could come of such cast-iron severity, but a monotonous baldness of execution? The orchestra consisted of fifty performers (two harpsichord players among the number): the singers were, Signora Agricola, wife of the composer, and fifty years of age; Signora Gasparini, a yet more ancient wonder, inasmuch as she was seventy-two years old; Signori Concialini and Porporino, and Mademoiselle Schmaling, afterwards *the* Mara.

What a pity it is that we have been defrauded of the memoirs of the life which that eminent songstress told Zelter, in 1829, that she was designing to write, though late in the day, for she was then eighty-one years of age! The personal incidents of her long artistic career must surely have been interesting in the hands of one who remained to the last, as her friend and panegyrist assures us, "characteristic, self-dependent, and peculiar." The memoir by Rochlitz, in his interesting work, "Für Freunde der Tonkunst," gives us a desire to know more; while the following passage from Zelter's cor-

respondence with Goethe is too curiously connected with royalty and art in Berlin, not to be welcome, independently of its anecdotical value.

"She came hither," says Zelter, "in 1771, from Leipsic, as Mademoiselle Schmaling, and made her *dêbut* in Hasse's 'Piramo e Thisbe,' at the same time with Concialini,—to the King's astonishment, who, at first, would hardly deign to hear her, as her paternal name sounded far too German for his ear. From that time to 1773, she sang here in the carnival operas 'Britannico,' 'Ifigenia,' 'Merope.' Then she fell in love with Mara, a violoncellist, and favourite of Prince Henry, the King's brother. As the two powers of course refused to sanction a marriage betwixt Berlin and Rheinsberg, Prince Henry's residence, the lovers absented themselves without leave. They were caught, and Mara was despatched to a regiment at Kustrin, where he was compelled to become a fifer. Mara returned to Berlin, and was allowed to marry her. From December, 1773, she sang as Madame Mara in the following carnival operas: 'Arminio,' 'Demofoonte,' 'Europa galante,' 'Partenope,' 'Attilio Regolo,' 'Orfeo,'

'Angelica e Medoro,' 'Cleofide,' 'Artemisia,' 'Rodelinda.' In 1779, in consequence of the Bavarian succession war, there was no carnival; and in the following year, 1780, the married couple secretly absented themselves for the second time.* Again they were arrested; but the King ordered they should be set free, to go where they liked; as he was anxious to get rid of Mara, even at so high a price. This we know from actual documents; but she, our

* The cause of this flight is by other historians ascribed to the following "passage:"—On leave of absence being denied to her when she wished to recruit her strength by a visit to the Bohemian *baden*, the songstress took the resolution of neglecting her professional duties, in the hope of being allowed to depart as worthless. The Czarovitch, Paul the First of Russia, happened about that time to pay a visit to Berlin; and she was announced to appear in one of the grand parts. She pretended illness. The King sent her word, in the morning of the day, that she was to get well and sing her best. She became, of course, worse—could not leave her bed. Two hours before the opera began, a carriage, escorted by eight soldiers, was at her door, and the captain of the company forced his way into her chamber, declaring that their orders were to bring her to the theatre, dead or alive. "You cannot; you see I am in bed." "That is of little consequence," said the obdurate machine; "we will take you, bed and all." There was nothing for it but to get up and go to the theatre; dress, and resolve to sing without the slightest taste or skill. And this Mara did. She kept her resolution for the whole of the first act, till a thought suddenly seized her that she might be punish-

friend, will not confess any knowledge of it, and complains of violence having been exercised towards her." That her Berlin trammels had graven deep traces in her mind may be gathered from a trait noted in Zelter's letters of 1803: "Mara," says he, "is said to have signified, while in Dresden, her wish to exhibit for the entertainment of the Elector; but when she was informed that His Highness in general is pleased to eat while music is going on, she let it be understood that it would be impossible for her to sing while others are dining. This declaration has cost her a hundred ducats, and the Elector an *aria*." When she was in England she had so far followed the natural order by which those tyrannized over become in turn despotic, that, at Oxford, she walked, with all the grandeur of *Rodelinda's* self, out of the orchestra, rather than stand up while "the Hallelujah Chorus" was performed.

ing herself in giving the Grand-Duke of Russia a bad opinion of her powers. A *bravura* came; and she burst forth with all her brilliancy, in particular distinguishing herself by a miraculous shake, which she sustained, and swelled, and diminished, with such wonderful art as to call down more applause than ever. Her disgust, however, at the transaction led, it is said, to a resolution to escape.

The rest of this curious and genuine fragment of biography has its value as further illustrating the state of art and patronage in Berlin. "Mara," continues Zelter, "had become an object of the most universal enthusiasm ever since the performance of the opera 'Britannico,'* in which, as *Agrippina*, she sang behind the scenes the aria 'Mi paventi il figlio indegno!' with a voice of tremendous power, and yet with a maternal pathos that forced bitter tears from my eyes every time I heard her. The piece is a regular *bravura* air, and such as was the fashion in those days: it was as if a thousand nightingales were straining their throats to warble for revenge.—In all tragic parts she seemed to rise a head taller than usual. I never beheld any thing grander than her *Queen Rodelinda*. Connoisseurs censured her for want of action in passionate parts. 'What!' she used to exclaim, 'am I to sing with my hands and

* By Graun, who wrote, be it noted, Italian operas for the gratification of the royal ear. This *bravura* was revived by Mademoiselle Löwe, in 1839-40, and was sung by her in London, during her short visit to England: a poor piece of antiquated display, it seemed, not superior to the obsolete *bravuras* by Lampugnani, and others, which may be found by dozens in old music books.—1853.

legs? I am a singer; and what I cannot do with my voice, I will not do at all.'

"The relation of such a being to her husband was a general subject of compassion. Mara in Rheinsberg abused the Prince's favour in the most gross and public manner. As it was a rarity to hear him play, the Prince had on one occasion, at carnival time, being then at Berlin with his whole suite, and eclipsing with his entertainments the royal *redoutes*, invited the court to hear the incomparable Mara perform. All came but the King, and one other, who was also missing,—namely, Mara himself. At last they dragged him in. He was drunk, and refused before the whole court, in spite of the entreaties of his patron, to play; so that the Prince could not but feel himself publicly compromised. The King regarded the insult as a species of high treason against his consort, who was present; and this was considered to be the cause of his severity on the occasion of Mara's first desertion. . . . . There were many other causes. The fine residence of Rheinsberg, near the frontier of Mecklenburg, was a nest of smugglers, whom no one dared to oppose that loved his life, while they were under the pro-

tection of the favourite. But the King knew very well where the contraband clue was fastened, which extended, by the aid of the court equipages, from Rheinsberg to Berlin. Mara closed his existence here in the most abandoned debauchery, although his wife never wholly forsook him. I once expressed to her my surprise at the generosity of her conduct towards him, when she replied, 'But you must at least allow that he was the handsomest man ever seen!'— Reichardt, too, had continual quarrels with him, because he would meddle with the Royal Opera. The King, for one whole carnival, sent Mara to sleep in the guard-house on the hard boards; where the common soldiers were allowed to play the roughest tricks with him. This nettled Reichardt; and therefore, as a young patronising *kapellmeister*, he wrote a long story to the King on the treatment of old musicians. On this the King remarked, 'I thought I should have thrown the trouble of the opera off my shoulders; and now I have the old plague again, with the addition of one fool more into the bargain!'"

How far "the old plague" complained of was the consequence of mistake and egotism, it were not altogether a loss of time to examine.

In Burney's time, at least, the philosopher-king was abundantly narrow in the choice of his music. The only operas permitted to be given were by Graun, Agricola, and Hasse; and even by the last composer very few. Occasionally, His Majesty chose to write a score himself, which labour,—to judge from the manuscripts of "Il Re Pastore," and of certain marches recently discovered at Berlin,—appears to have consisted in his vouchsafing to scratch down a few melodies upon the ruled paper: noting down his notions of the manner in which they should be completed for Quantz, his musical washer-*man*, to fill up. The latter, however, seems to have kept the peace, and yet gone his own way; for we find that he was independent enough to dare in one composition to give *an upward motion* to certain orchestral parts, in spite of the monarch's pencilled injunction — "Let them descend." "Upon the whole," concludes the judicious Burney, "my expectations from Berlin were not quite answered, as I did not find that the style of composition, or manner of execution, to which his Prussian Majesty has attached himself, fulfilled my ideas of perfection."—What good, indeed, to the free mind of Art could result

from such narrow patronage? What good from the three flute *concertos* played nightly by the royal *virtuoso* at his private concerts, until the loss of his front teeth destroyed the possibility of further trespass upon the patience of the obsequious court; and the King, as Burney tells us in his "History of Music," ceased, therefore, to "take further pleasure in the art!" The manner, indeed, resulting from such paralyzing support, or, to call things by their right names, interference, could hardly fail to be what Burney declares it was — mechanical, and devoid of sensibility. The King's musical presidency, it is needless to point out, tended to a systematic and resolute discouragement in composition of all those national characteristics out of which a style is made. His liberty of conscience meant prejudice against all things grave and ecclesiastical; when he heard of any composer having written an anthem or oratorio, the philosopher fancied his taste was contaminated by it, and would say of his other productions, — "*Oh, this smells of the church!*" He would be French in his opinions—Italian in his ears, and, between the two, German Art, the spirit of which is Belief, and the musical expression uttered in har-

mony more than in melody, stood but a poor chance. The natural stuff of his countrymen is too robust and solid in texture to take the colour with which he resolved to dye it; and hence, in place of displaying that vitality and creative power which we have a right to expect in a great metropolis, the Opera of Berlin was, under the auspices of Frederic II., a formal state machine, as innocent of the warmth of real life, or the poetry of enjoyment, as are the bespoken dithyrambics of a laureate, or the restricted festivities of a diplomatic circle.

For such royal patrons I have often thought that the fittest musical amusement would be the monster snuff-box playing the few chosen tunes, or the puppet-show of the Great Mogul on his throne, with a band to be wound up at pleasure, which the Dinglingers or Maelzels of mechanical invention can construct. It is of little matter whether the romantic, or the classical, or the frivolous, predominates in the composition of him who prefers possessing in art a puppet which can be manœuvred at pleasure, in place of a free and grateful creature, constrained only by love and cherishing to exercise spontaneously the noble powers of creation. A king should

not make of Music either his drill-sergeant, or his fool, or his paramour, lest his people too become towards her tyrannical, or absurdly tolerant, or licentious. The best patronage which those who sit in high places can bestow on the works of genius is by practising the hardest lesson they have to learn—the sacrifice of their own whims and fancies. All honour to King Louis of Bavaria, then, who, in planning his magnificent palace of Munich, desired his architect to build it not merely for himself, but for his children, and for his children's children. Even Louis of France, who cared for little, Heaven knows! beyond the circumference of his ambrosial *perruque* and his velvet mantle covered with *fleurs de lis*, was, as regards music, a better king for the French nation, when providing in *L'Académie Royale* for all those natural tastes and impulses of his subjects out of which styles and schools proceed, than the redoubtable Frederic, when endeavouring in his superb Opera House to feed the German people with French superficialities and Italian airs and graces.

Still, while we remark how the brilliant and philosophical King not only threw back his country's music, but, by the abiding popularity

gained for his name, made a false taste, as it were, sacred, and to some degree perpetual in his metropolis,—it is just, too, to observe, that German Opera had shown few signs of a will or way of its own before the time when Frederic the Great was called away from his piping and patronising of Art to his hard and unadorned tomb in the Garrison Church at Potsdam, whence Napoleon carried off his sword. Gluck's operas, it is true, might have startled him out of his despotic exclusiveness, and he might have hastened to adopt them in the fulness of his Gallomania, seeing that their most brilliant successes were gained in Paris rather than in Vienna; but he loved Italian singers, and these could not abide Gluck's music. At that period, too, Mozart had only just begun to give the world those marvellous compromises where Italian *cantilena* and German harmony combined, to the enchantment of all civilized musical ears. The fame of the Great King, and the love borne to his memory, may, after all, be more largely chargeable with the exotic tendencies of the Royal Opera in Berlin, than his own despotic management and short-sighted tastes. Be this as it may, the national musical

drama, when it began to take a shape and form of its own, was rather for the people than for the court, being performed at the National Theatre. There, however, the arrival of Iffland in 1796 as manager, and his distinction as actor no less than dramatist, retarded the growth of musical taste, by furnishing the public with another species of entertainment, excellent after its kind, and congenial to its taste. Nevertheless, Himmel's "Fanchon" managed to struggle into life, and to circulate thence from Berlin throughout Germany. It is now forgotten: forgotten, too, is the "Donauweibchen" of Kauer—in its day a universal favourite; so are the merry operas of Dittersdorf. To these slighter works the court can hardly be blamed for preferring the *buffo* music of Italy, executed by Italian singers. Yet in the executive department of Opera, too, Germany was becoming richer. In the catalogue of popular operatic celebrities at Berlin,—to turn over which makes one half melancholy, the mime and the musician being among the most signal illustrations of Fame's transiency that the world possesses,—we shall find such names as "die schöne Baranius," "die Döbbelin," celebrated for her performance

in Naumann's "Cora;" "die Unzelmann," praised by Zelter for her agreeable singing and acting in "Die verwandelten Weiber;" "die Schick," and "die Bethmann;" the last, from a pretty singer, having ripened into a great actress; while at the court theatre, Fischer the elder was a *basso* sufficiently excellent to have parts written expressly for him.

Ere Fischer appeared, Reichardt had passed away, who, in 1775, succeeded Graun as *kapellmeister*, and is described to have mounted the Italian opera in a very splendid manner, after the death of Frederic the Great. Reichardt was in turn succeeded by Righini, an Italian, and who composed many works; not, however, more Italian in their style than the operas of the Winters and Naumanns, who chose any writer rather than Gluck as their model. This timid want of nationality among the German composers may probably have told favourably upon the German vocalists. By this time, too, the delicious works of Mozart were at hand, forming a point of universal union, simultaneously satisfying the taste of the court and of all who loved such melodies as could flow sweetly from *la bocca Romana*, and the more

musical desires of a people who were increasingly earnest to find thoughts rather than sounds in Music.

The early period of the present century, then, seems to have been a time of progress and enjoyment for Opera in Berlin. The court and the people, while their tastes kept asunder, were gradually influencing each other,—these to the improvement of the singer, those to the increased nationality of the composer. An untoward fate, however, seems to have pursued German Opera. Mozart died at the moment when he was attaining to a true knowledge of its capabilities; Beethoven's melancholy infirmity, and the disappointments which attended the production of his "Fidelio," limited his stage contributions to that one drama. At the moment, however, when the national repertory of new master-works was in danger of being exhausted, and the national taste of composers, hardly sufficiently assured, ran some danger of being lost among the Italian melodies rather than the German harmonies of Mozart, the evil day was averted at Berlin by the appearance and triumphs of Madame Milder in 1812. For many subsequent years her acting and

singing illustrate the golden period to which all those devoted to German Opera enthusiastically recur. They triumphed, at all events, for a time, above the flimsy court predilections for foreign aid and talent, by which the taste of Frederic the Great—even now represented in a diluted form—has always hindered the national music of Germany from thriving kindly on the stage of its northern metropolis.

This celebrated songstress was, according to Fétis, born in the year 1785, at Constantinople, where her father, a courier belonging to the Austrian court, was upon a mission. Her musical and dramatic endowments,—a voice which has been universally described to me as magnificent, the fullest and richest of *soprani*,—and a person which ripened into a rare stateliness, early attracted the attention of M. Shikaneder, the Vienna buffoon manager for whom the "Zauberflöte" was composed, and who wrote its incomprehensible *libretto*. He placed her under an Italian singing-master, and superintended her appearance on the stage. But she continued to be a singer of Nature's making; for so inflexible was her organ, or so indifferently cultivated, as to be incapable of the slightest

trill or embellishment; and though Mrs. Jameson says that "this magnificent creature never would sing any other than German music," the truth is, that she *could* not. She was, in addition to this, so indifferent a musician, as to learn every part only by having it played again and again to her. But for that, she might have been accepted implicitly as the type of the great German songstress; because the incomparable "Fidelio" was written for her, and also the part of *Emeline* in Weigl's somewhat lachrymose "Die Schweitzer Familie." It was for her, too, I believe, that the operas of Gluck were revived, which make so brilliant a point of retrospect in the history of Berlin Opera, and still form its best and most satisfactory feature. It may be fantastic to presume that the Greek blood which some say ran in her veins had any part, conjointly with the heaviness of her voice, in prompting her to assume the lyrical cothurnus in those splendid dramas; but certain it is, that they were her greatest triumphs. In later years, when the lustre of her voice began to fail, she took the fancying of singing such parts as Mozart's *Donna Elvira* and *Susanna;* but even this music was too figurative for her to succeed in.

How completely Madame Milder satisfied a national desire, in spite of all these technical deficiencies, and the drawback of a manner in society which has been described to me as indolent and frigid even to the unamiable point,* may be gathered from the rapture which she excited—not merely in the court—not merely in the public—but in grave composers and tough German critics. So much for the triumph of Nature! On her first visit to Berlin in 1812, "The voice, countenance, and manner of this young lady," writes Zelter, "have a power, grace, and freedom, especially in the part of

* I have been told that Milder was restrained and ungracious towards children; in this how different from our own stately Mrs. Siddons, who was more than once found, as one of her biographers tells us, "with her magnificent hair let down, playing with a little child, and telling it faëry tales!" A friend of mine, who remembers Milder's reserve, but remembers too her magnificent impersonation of the heroines of Gluck at Berlin, in the years 1818, 1819; was present at a whimsical scene in one of these performances. At the moment when Blum, the bass singer, who used to strengthen himself for the part of *Hercules* upon champagne, was carrying off the colossal *Alcestis* from the shades below, —Queen Milder, aware of the risk she ran in arms so unsteady, and overpowered with sudden terror, exclaimed, "Herr J——! Ich falle!" This exclamation elicited a simultaneous roar from all parts of the theatre. And from that day forward Milder was *led*, not carried, from the stage by the God of Strength.

Emeline, such as we have not witnessed here for a long time. Her singing has been blamed as unscientific; but I find much to praise in it—warmth, truth, connection, certainty; and a kind of Swiss plainness which is displayed in the most innocent manner in the world. At least I have never seen passion represented with such moderation and decided effect." Three years later we find the same writer (by no means a blind and bigoted lover of German singers) lauding her golden voice as "positively belonging to the class of rarities," and herself as "the only singer who gives you entire satisfaction." So popular became this stately enchantress in Berlin, that she settled finally there, till made willing to yield her throne in consequence of misunderstandings with Spontini. Her picture is in every musical house I entered. She must have been a gorgeous-looking woman—the very *Alcestis* and *Iphigenia* of Gluck in her majesty of attitude and the sublime repose of her features; and so entirely did she impress her own statutes upon her subjects, the public, as things not to be departed from, that I have been told that when Madame Schröder Devrient came to Berlin, and presumed to exhibit her-

self in some of the classical characters with less munificence of veil and drapery and more liberality of arm and bosom than her predecessor, it was as distasteful to the rigid Berlin critics as a yard-long Rubini-warble thrust into the midst of "Total Eclipse" would be to the frequenters of the Ancient Concerts. Nay, by a touch of royal despotism, inherited from him who sent his soldiers to fetch him la Barbarini, her unclassicality cost her an engagement. When I saw Mademoiselle von Fassman in 1840, to my ignorant eye absolutely overladen with veil and diadem, chaplet and stole, in "Iphigenie," and remarked to some one on the impolicy of such a disproportionate quantity of drapery, I was answered—and the answer was considered to be final—"Milder dressed it so."

While the Milder was thus possessing the public of the Court-Opera with her classical traditions, the National Theatre was making a step in the advancement of German Opera towards one of its most brilliant periods. This was by the production of Hoffmann's "Undine," in 1816.

The name of this singular man is best known

in England by those terrible or fascinating tales in which Imagination, while walking on the bounds of Madness, still keeps so strong a hold of probability and natural feeling that the reader hardly knows, on laying down the book, which is real—the dream he has been perusing, or the life to which he is returning. Every chamber of imagery, to which creative power has resort, lay open to Hoffmann. He was a draughtsman, as well as a novelist and musician; had tried many professions, and proved many vicissitudes; and hence the marvellous versatility of illustration by the spell of which his tales, if they fail of catching the reader in one paragraph, cannot but lay hold of him in the next; since, in their wildest vagaries, some homely domestic picture, or some feeling we have all of us felt, steals in so imperceptibly, yet so familiarly, as to make its *entourage* forgotten. During the period of Hoffmann's musical career, which included a directorship at Bamberg, and another at Dresden —a career only entered on somewhere about his thirtieth year, when the war of 1806 had driven him from his *Rath*-ship in Prussian Poland— he tried every form of composition. He has left behind him operas, ballets, a *Miserere*, a

Mass, a Symphony, a pianoforte trio, sonatas for the same instrument, and several vocal compositions. Those who know him best by his tales, would be disposed from them to expect what may be called nightmare music. Yet, those who have inspected his works assure me that it is almost tamely regular and unimaginative. To quote a contribution by Herr Truhn to "Der Freihafen" for 1839, whoever opens a score by Hoffmann, with the expectation of meeting in sound all that world of *diablerie* and phantasm which the celebrated author of the "Phantasie Stücke" had entirely made his own, will be considerably disappointed. His music has no where that unearthly wildness which pervades the romantic operas of Weber, Marschner, Lindpaintner, and the gloomy ballads of Löwe and others: on the contrary, it is composed after such classical models as Mozart and Cherubini; and, like their works, dwells in the genuine musical region of sweetness of sound and beauty of form. Even in the music he composed for Werner's tragedy, "The Cross on the Baltic," where he might have embodied all the terrors of the aboriginal forests and their heathen inhabitants, the Scythian rhythms of Gluck, in the

"Iphigenia in Tauris," served him as a model.* Yet, somewhat to mitigate the impression of insipidity or want of enterprise which such a character is calculated to convey, we are told by the same authority that the music for the parts of *Undine* and her uncle *Kühleborn*, the water-sprite, is mysterious and characteristic; that the heroine's songs are for the most part accompanied by the *violoncello*, whence such a manner of colouring as Weber afterwards perfected appears to be indicated—to say nothing of several wind-instrument effects no less novel and romantic. The success of Hoffmann's "Undine" was great—the work having been performed twenty-

* Surely the very Scythian chorus in question embodies as much aboriginal rudeness and heathen terror as any piece of music that could be named. Indeed, on returning to this character of Hoffmann, I might have been disposed to accept it as disproving that which it was written to prove, had not the testimony of musicians more acute and famous than Herr Truhn assured me that such of Hoffmann's music as is extant is singularly tame, vapid, and featureless. Several manuscript works by him exist in the Royal Library at Berlin:—"Julius Sabinus" (an opera in three acts), "Liebe aus Eifersucht" (an opera in three acts), "Harlequin" (a ballet), and "Der trank der Unstreblichkeit" (an opera in four acts), among the number. These were closely examined, not long ago, with a view to the performance of some, or parts of them; but the plan was relinquished as impossible.—1853.

three times before the National Theatre of Berlin was burned down. Since that time it has not been played anywhere, partly owing to the expensive decorations required—those in Berlin cost twelve thousand *thalers*—partly owing to a rumour that the score had perished in the flames, which was erroneously spread abroad.

There may be another reason why "Undine" cannot keep the stage; and why it is as little susceptible of musical treatment as of being frequently personated.—The heroine's character is so delicately and spiritually complex as almost to be exceptional. Exquisite as is the idea of a creature of the elements becoming partially animated with a human soul, it may be doubted whether Music has the power of expressing such a duality, and whether the entire colour of the character must not be left to the interpreting artist. And Shakspeare's *Ariel* itself hardly offers greater difficulties to flesh and blood than La Motte Fouque's fountain spirit. Her representative should possess great personal beauty of a pale, sad, and visionary cast—grace, freaked with a certain capricious wildness—a voice capable of changing every instant from the most caressing and pathetic affection, to that distant,

airy mirth in which mortality has no part. Such a being as this, it is needless to say, is rarely to be found in the world of *prima donnas;* and hence, often and again as the tale has been set,* it has never, and I think *can* never, become a stock-piece on the stage.

Neither the strong influences which Queen Milder exercised in the days of her glory on the stage of the Berlin Opera, nor the production at the second theatre of a work so attractive as "Undine" is said to have been, could break the court habits of taste and preference. The limited extent of the genuine German repertory, and the all-pervading intoxications of Rossini, which, for the time, were strong enough to seduce Beethoven's own townsmen from their allegiance, might have something to do with this. There were no other new foreign works then in the artistic mart so likely to fit a Grand German Theatre Royal, not vowed to its own country, and yet not wholly Italian, as "La Vestale" and "Fernand Cortez;" and,

* Most recently by Lortzing, the well-known German composer of light music, also by Colonel Lvoff, little less known as the distinguished Russian amateur—one of the most distinguished amateurs that has ever appeared.—1853.

accordingly, Signor Spontini, their composer, was invested with the *baton* of operatic sovereignty at Berlin,—such a wand of discord as has hardly ever been wielded,—even in the world of Music!

Not only was a foreign appointment like Spontini's of itself calculated to throw a musical society such as that of Berlin, into the state of perpetual storm, slander, and irritation, which suited best its intellectual activity; but more generous influences were at work which, in due time, produced their fruit. Prussian art, as well as Prussian literature, was beginning to throw off the French stays into which Frederic the Great had forced it, from impulses more honest than those of merely sarcastic antipathy. The people of the town had found a natural development of their own strongly marked musical tastes within the walls of their own *Sing-Académie*. The frequenters of this—the amateurs who had taken part in the *Liedertafel* societies long enough to find out how the national heart beat—the accomplished instrumental amateurs who clung to Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven (a few to Bach), as affording the only true field of pleasure, resented this foreign domi-

nation; not frivolously and vexatiously only, but in good, sober system, and earnest. They might not resist running to see the gorgeous spectacles—the elephants the size of life, and the other stage splendours called forth for the inauguration of the new *kapellmeister*, but they criticised him searchingly in the true Berlin fashion,* and only waited for the moment and the man to declare themselves openly.

* Yet, while such was the tone and temper of Berlin, as regarded Spontini's music, in completion and balance of the picture it must be stated, that a deservedly respected professional and critical authority—I mean Zelter—wrote, and it seems thought, with considerable temper and fairness concerning the interloper and his operas, as an extract or two from his correspondence with Goëthe will pleasantly manifest:—

"*Berlin, June*, 1820.—Spontini has just got his last opera translated into German. He requires for this work forty violinists in the band (not more than half the number being there already), and an enlargement of the space for the orchestra in the Opera House. If the rest of the instruments be increased in proportion, the people in the *parterre* may look for places outside the doors. For my part, I shall not fail to derive some good from observing the experiment, although I plainly see how and where it must end, if the grain which is wrapped in all these folds is ever to be found. . . .

"*July*, 1820.—I have heard Spontini's 'Cortes' twice. The poem is by De Jouy, and much better than the very bad German version which is substituted here. I am disposed to prefer the music to that of 'La Vestale,' but must hear it once or twice

The moment and the man arrived in the year 1822, on the occasion of the opening of the New Schauspiel-haus, and the bursting into day of Weber's "Der Freischutz," then and there represented for the first time. "It came upon us," writes one to whose warrant this sketch is largely indebted for its historical tone, "like sunshine and unexpected good news. There had been

again, as I have gained a kind of general view of the whole, but as yet no fixed point of observation. Single portions are, in reality, admirable; and the dances throughout are good, and full of genius. But what has hitherto confounded me, is to see that an Italian of great natural powers, habituated to great effects, should adapt to great heroical subjects such petty melodic forms, which seem the more unaccountable from being, as regards the instrumental accompaniment, most heavily overlaid. . . .

"*June*, 1825.—I have twice sat through our new twenty-stone-weight opera, 'Alcidor,' by Spontini, which takes four hours in the performance. The music is a work of almost miraculous labour; one must be a thorough musician even to appreciate its amount with the proper measure of astonishment. It is a chaos of the rarest effects, which seem to be striving each to destroy the other, like the singing princes that appear in it, and imply immeasurable diligence in the composer. There is the toil of ten years in the work; and I might fret myself to bits, and still be unable to produce anything like it. The current criticisms are not just to the author; they either condemn the work, or extol it with cold approbation. He has succeeded only too well in what he intended to do: he wished to excite wonder—to amaze; and with me he has fully accomplished his object. To me he appears like the Gold King in the story, who breaks

no puffing and very little talk about it. From the first notes of the overture to the last of the *finale*, it was a brilliant triumph; and not merely for the author, but for all true Germans. When Weber was called for at the conclusion of the opera, and showers of garlands were rained upon him from all parts of the house, there came down also numberless copies of a poem in which he was praised as the man who *gave us music instead of elephants*. The opera was ad-

people's heads with lumps of gold. As musical execution now depends for its success on *ex*cess, the greatest demands upon it are not unreasonable; and the complaints of the people in the orchestra of its difficulty, are a mere nothing to what the ear has to endure in dwelling so long in a labyrinth of sounds, which are at once too attractive and too oppressive to escape from. I have no such power of endurance, and thought that yesterday I should come off more easily; but to-day I still ache all over; eyes and ears, yea, my very skin and bones, are sore with much seeing, and hearing, and sitting. All this is not to be laid to the door of the composer in particular; it belongs to the *time*, which hurries every one to destruction who cannot help being carried away by it. In short, the work is, in all externals, a very remarkable one, on account of the exaggeration of style carried to the utmost pitch, exhibiting power and beauty in *travestie*, and in its real hollowness producing a confusion—nay, an annihilating effect. The parts intended to be melodious seem to me like an outline drawing, in which the contours are perpetually breaking off instead of flowing, and thus wander into caricature."

mirably performed. Madame Seidler was the loveliest *Agatha* one could see. It was popular —I mean in the very streets—as soon as brought out; even difficult portions, like the first air of *Caspar*, being heard everywhere. When I paid a visit to Weber, at Dresden, six months later, in his half-modest, half-ironical way, he raised his hand to the top of the looking-glass in his drawing-room, which was overhung with laurel garlands, and said, quietly—'Die hat mir alle "Der Freischütz" eingebracht.' ('All this has "Der Freischütz" brought me.') The work had then been performed everywhere throughout Germany."

And this very opera was the one I heard massacred with such carelessness in the very opera house where it had first appeared! Had the performance taken place under one of our own theatrical managements, I should not have ventured to assume its mediocrity as typical or significant of the general style; but I had been bidden to look to Germany as the head-quarters of zeal and completeness; and knew that the Berlin Opera is directly under the patronage of the state. There ought, in such an establishment, to be no bad days—no blanks—

no chasms. In 1839-40, there appeared to have been little else for many years, with the addition of snares, pitfalls, and sunken rocks.

Since the days of Milder's departure, and the triumphs of "Der Freischütz," it was universally agreed that the general style of theatrical singing in Berlin had become less and less excellent; that voice after voice had been destroyed, and artist after artist alienated; while the composers of the country, ill-paid, coldly received, and indifferently treated, had gradually shrunk off to their own nooks and corners, there to reproduce the hope long deferred, and the irritation so hard to repress, in the form of humours and crotchets on the part of the active, and of a sullen indolence on those more phlegmatically organized.—Twenty-six years ago, when the agreeable author of the "Ramble among the Musicians in Germany," was at Berlin, the parts taken by Milder in Gluck's operas were supported by Mademoiselle Schechner. She, however, was only a passing stranger; and though a fine actress, though with an excellent voice, was still one of the many whose appearance leaves no traces on the progress of her art.—Mademoiselle Sontag, too, was at that time in full bloom at

the Königstadtisches Theater, but her predilections led her shortly afterwards to devote herself to the Italian stage. Matters had in every way changed for the worse when I was in Berlin. Mademoiselle Fassmann, as I saw her, was a weary distance below Mademoiselle Schechner as she had been described to me. Every visit to the Berlin Opera left me more chilled and more disheartened than the last. Every inquiry received the same rejoinder. That which had been merely comfortable partisanship in the days of Weber, had ripened with time into a settled and corroding hatred, a daily and hourly quarrel, in which too many bad passions were embarked, for art not to suffer, and to have reached the state of pause, if not of apathy, in which I found it in 1839-40.

It is difficult to conceive an artist enjoying a European fame — competence, official distinctions and honours — placed in a position less enviable than the one at which the Chevalier Spontini had arrived about that period. Every musical person in the Prussian capital seemed to make common cause against him, though no two, probably, would have agreed for half-an-hour, as to what celebrated person it would be advis-

able to enthrone in his place. Man and music were alike detested, as foreign *incubi* imposed upon an unwilling public by courtly despotism propitiated by flattery and amused by intrigue, which hindered any healthy development of German feeling, or German enterprise. The same persons, who might be seen obsequiously greeting the composer of "La Vestale," and answering his suave compliments (principally addressed to himself) with compliments no less dulcet, might be heard, the very instant Spontini's back was turned, stabbing his reputation with anecdotes, the envenomed acrimony of which was terrible. It was stated, point-blank, that Spontini had not composed his own "La Vestale," nor "Fernand Cortez,"—as might be proved, of course, by the miserable and progressive inferiority of his subsequent operas, "Olimpia," "Alcidor," "Nourmahal," "Agnes von Hohenstauffen," not one of which had ever travelled a yard beyond the Brandenburg Gate. There were people who could tell, it was added, how the great genius to whom he was indebted had been disposed of; and the malignant *inuendo* would be clenched with "*An Italian, you know!*" the meaning of which (if mean-

ing there was) was strange, by way of an every-day insinuation, ventured in the public street at noon-day, by townsman against townsman. As for such minor offences as favouritism in the making of theatrical engagements, bad influences set in motion to thwart the hopes and injure the prospects of new composers,—tales of these were cherished and disseminated by the million.

Whatever might be the truth or falsehood of all these scandals, it is certain that the Chevalier Spontini did not possess the personal qualities which neutralize antipathy and disarm malice. Singularly courteous and polished in manner as he was, with a full command over the civilest phraseology of old-fashioned diplomacy, I have never met with a musician whose conversation appeared to me more profitless and less engaging—more utterly devoid of instruction, raciness, and national vivacity—than his. For an Italian, he was the driest, most polite, least picturesque man I ever saw. For a countenance which, in its time, must have been regular and handsome, and which was preserved so long as its owner lasted with a lover-like solicitude, I never looked on a face so entirely without play of

expression. Its home-aspect, to judge from the affectionate respect paid to Spontini by those of his own family, must surely have been more winning.—A part of the above peculiarities of manner might, it is true, be referred to the story of his earlier life. His long struggle for theatrical success in France may have done its part, in shutting up,—parching,—tying down and lacing in everything like emotion or impulse: but his nature can hardly have originally been a genial one.—To ask him for information concerning any musical thing or person in Berlin save one, was a labour lost; though he would speak as much as could be desired concerning the number of orchestral players under his call when one of his own operas was to be given; and of the remarkable compass of voice required by the *prima donna* who was to sing in them; and it was hardly possible to avoid smiling at the pleasing varieties with which the same sad story may be told, when the composer added, concerning his later operas,—"They cannot be represented anywhere but in Berlin, because I consider them as something select, belonging exclusively to His Majesty."—Of his "Milton," which he brought to England, as it is well known,

for the purpose of getting it represented, and which could not be given in consequence (among other difficulties) of the licenser's veto, I never heard him speak. That opera, probably, is still extant in manuscript.

It is a very difficult thing to give to a composer, having a history like Spontini, a fair and fit pedestal in the Musical Pantheon—and one neither too high nor too low. Partizanship is sure to enlist itself in the matter; and the *maestro*, who could only get his greatest opera "La Vestale" represented by the express and despotic interference of the sweetest lady who ever intrigued—the Empress Josephine of France—and who, during all his after life, had to maintain his position betwixt the most flattering court favour and the most envenomed hatred among his comrades, can only be rightly valued by an effort of dispassionate judgment such as is rarely demanded. What if he be classed among the Germanized Italians, of whom Cherubini was one and Clementi another, and who have lost, with their nationality, their national *dolcezza* as entirely as certain Italianized-Germans—Hasse, Mayer, Winter—gained it? This will, in part, help us towards a definition: but, it

must be added, that while Spontini had the dryness which, I fancy, distinguishes the piano-forte music of Clementi, and even (in less degree) the magnificent compositions of the greater Cherubini, he has no where shown a science in any respect analogous to theirs. He wrote only opera; and the French love of effect, which has its bad and its good side in musical drama, seems largely to have influenced him, and to have impelled him to try for a lightness, a popularity, a piquancy of rhythm, to which he never wholly attained. His works may be described as skilful, rather than thoughtful—yet, for operas, written in accordance with the modes of the moment, not sufficiently modish—and in this respect outdone by the operas of Meyerbeer, who, whatever he *has not* known, has known thoroughly his time, and the state of his art, in choosing the direction of his quest for renown. A certain temperate eclecticism pervades Spontini's operas, which is often insipid, rarely beautiful, never deep; and because of this, it may justly be feared, they will sink into oblivion, with all the fine things and brilliant moments which they comprise; whereas "Les deux Journées" of Cherubini, and "La Didona Abbandonata"

of Clementi, though less brilliant, and less conciliatory of popular suffrage—and, like Spontini's music, rather dry—will not soon be forgotten.

CHAPTER III.

"COMIC OPERA" IN BERLIN.

French operas in Germany—The pound of tea across the Border —Mademoiselle Löwe—Her cadences—Her demeanour—Her popularity — Her magnificence of costume — Mademoiselle Grünbaum—The *Konigstadtisches Theater*—"Der Bauer als Millionair"—German humour—German opera books addicted to the supernatural and monstrous—Specimen of their subjects —The Piper of Hameln.—Gläser's music—The hybrid school —Lortzing's operas.

"You must wait for our grand operas till the review is over, when the court comes back from Potsdam, and the orchestra is in full force," was in 1839 the unanimous answer to my complaint against the weak and languid performance of "Der Freischutz:"—"They do some of Gluck's magnificently; and Spontini's 'La Vestale' and 'Fernand Cortez.'"—"And which of Marschner's?"—"None." "And Weber's 'Eury-

anthe?'"—"Very rarely:" and out came the hundredth tale of cabal and court predilection. From all I heard, I might as well,—in indulgence of my intense curiosity as to antique German Opera, have bespoken "La Costanza e Fortezza,"—the composition by Fux, performed in the open air at Prague one hundred and twenty years ago, on the coronation of Charles VII. as King of Bohemia; which Quantz described to Dr. Burney as being in the old church style, coarse and dry, but at the same time "grand," and as having "a better effect, perhaps, with so immense a band,* and in such an immense space, than could have been produced by more delicate compositions."

As regarded the slighter German works of the day,—the operas of Gläser, and Lortzing, and Conradin Kreutzer, I suspect I might have

* This opera was performed by a hundred voices and a hundred instruments. There was not an indifferent singer among the principal performers, all of whom were of the first class. Among the six male singers, Carestini is perhaps the name best known. The female singers were the two sisters d'Amberville. The choruses were in the French style, and served for dances; and it was upon the singing in this opera that Benda formed his style. —See *Burney's Present State of Music in Germany*, vol. ii. p. 177, 178.

waited for the return of *King Sebastian*, before I should have been treated to anything of the kind at the Grand Opera in 1839. That its managers, however, did not disdain works flimsy in structure, and unambitious in scale, I had proof in the operas which I *did* hear in Berlin. These were—

"Le Postillon de Longjumeau" - -	*Adam.*
"Le Maçon" - - - - -	*Auber.*
"Le Pré aux Clercs" - - - -	*Herold.*
"Le Domino Noir" - - - -	*Auber.*

What has been said of the "Guido and Ginevra" at Brunswick, applies in even fuller force to these pretty trifles, as regards their effect when translated from French to German. Every one has been told the fate of the first pound of tea that ever crossed the Border: how the good Scottish lady to whom the delicacy was entrusted had it cooked and served up like a vegetable, to the extreme disappointment of her guests, who found the far-famed delicacy "nothing so wonderful after all." Little better treated than this unlucky Hyson or Bohea is the Comic Opera of France, as far as I am acquainted with the result of German attempts to naturalize it. Though more generally relished in

Germany then it was before 1839 in England,—where, indeed, it had been thoroughly disguised under an intolerable grossness of condiment, when not utterly changed past recognition by a destruction of its distinctive taste and texture,—the real *aroma* was not the less lost. And yet, the French comic operas which I heard performed in the Prussian capital had every advantage which Germany could give them—royal patronage, and a company well fitted for their representation, difference of clime and language considered. In three of the works here enumerated, the *prima donna* was the far-famed Mademoiselle Löwe.

She was then in the prime of her powers, and of her popularity; and still was neither a complete nor a pleasing singer. At the time I speak of Mademoiselle Löwe was one of the most ambitious of contemporary florid vocalists, losing no opportunity to exhibit the long compass of her voice, in imitation of the examples set by Malibran; but she was neither exact in tune nor in time. The extreme notes of the scale she hazarded were oftener false than true; the *roulades* she launched were executed with a hurry, betokening anxiety as to their completion,

which totally destroys the charm of brilliant execution. Neither was Mademoiselle Löwe the comic actress that she professed to be. It is true, however, that, as often as I remonstrated against any of her *smorfie*, I was told that her *forte* lay in the passionate and stately tragedy of Italian Opera, — that her best characters were *Norma* and *Desdemona*. For these, her majestic presence, her brilliant eyes, and her raven hair, eminently fitted her. Yet so extravagantly was she applauded by her friends whenever she attempted the drawing-room airs and graces of Auber, and Herold, and Adam, that I began early to suspect that the qualification was an excuse employed to quiet a cavilling stranger, rather than a distinction owned for home use. Had I said, in the pit of the Berlin Opera, that I thought serenity and elegance were wanting to Mademoiselle Löwe's demeanour—had I whispered that marchionesses and court-ladies do not grasp their furled fans in the middle, as if they were tools, not toys, but let them gracefully dangle from the wrist; had I insinuated that in the supper-scene of "Le Domino Noir," where the heroine is obliged to appear in peasant's disguise to baffle the curiosity of a

house full of rakish young *diplomates*, there was a conscious humour and cleverness in her glance, and in her assumed *ton de soubrette*, too natural to the woman to be natural to the situation, which is one of the utmost discomposure and alarm:—Had I uttered any one of these heresies, I say, I should probably have been worse treated than I once was at a Paris *soirée* for presuming to assert that Madame Dudevant (George Sand) had ever wandered about the world in "doublet and hose." Therefore, for the sake of peace, so often as my neighbours broke forth into raptures about one of the Löwe's enormous flourishes, I admired the crown of blush-roses from beneath which it issued; when they found "favour and prettiness" in every one of her motions and gestures, I fell back upon her symmetrical *corsage*, and the sleeve, which was a real *seduisante*. I have never—no, not even in Paris, that paradise of millinery—seen on the stage any one who understood the attractions of costume better than Mademoiselle Löwe.*

* Very shortly after these notes appeared, the public of Paris and London ratified the judgment therein expressed of Mademoiselle Löwe. Resolute to follow the example of Mademoiselle

Less admirable in every respect was Mademoiselle Grünbaum, a sprightly and rather ugly young lady, possessing no better requisites for opera than a destroyed voice, and a complete ignorance that such was the fact. Yet she was vaunted as a star by Herr von Raumer, in his letters from England. Of the male part of the *corps*, Herr Mantius was undoubtedly the best, his voice being then a sweet tenor, and his style more *cantabile* than the style of most of his mates. Herr Blum, the principal bass, was one of those hard-working artists who take great pains and produce very small results; but he,

Sontag, this idol of North Germany relinquished her throne in Berlin, turned a deaf ear to every temptation held out to retain her there, and repaired to Paris with the purpose of taking the Italian stage by storm. In spite of very powerful friends, naturally attracted by a manner sprightly, graceful, and intelligent,—in spite of her German reputation,—Mademoiselle Löwe was allowed to leave Paris without an engagement. She was little more fortunate in London, where she appeared in "La Straniera" and "Marino Faliero," with only a moderate success,—ere the close of her short engagement at *Her Majesty's Theatre* subsiding into the occupation of *Donna Elvira*, in "Don Giovanni." This she sang and acted very well; but the part is a sad downfall for one bent on the *Normas* and *Desdemonas* of Italian opera: accordingly Mademoiselle Löwe passed hence to Italy, where she was more popular, till marriage removed her from the stage.—1853.

too, was entirely worn out. In short, as regards the singers, French opera in Berlin, as in every other German town where I have since met it, —was a dreary and disappointing entertainment. The German orchestras, too, have no sympathy with the music. However correct and careful they be, I have never failed to find them falling short of that smart and stimulating piquancy which belongs to French blood, and to French blood alone. The superficial glitter of the *Opera Comique* (the glitter of a diamond, which, however thin, is genuine) can never be *got up* by German industry and research. Why the trick should have been so often attempted—why the Germans, with all their humour and fantasy, their capital low comedians, their careful actors, and their honest love of the stage, should not have been more able or willing to support comic music of their own,—struck me as strange, till I had weighed and considered matters a little.

This I was led to do, after visiting the *Königstadtisches Theater* in Berlin; in 1839, the third theatre of the city,—and the head quarters of illegitimate drama—to which German comic opera at that time seemed banished. To the musician, this theatre, shabby and dusty as it

looked, was well worth a visit in 1839 on other grounds: for memory's sake, as the scene of Sontag's earliest triumphs—and also as then possessing an excellent resident *prima donna* in Mademoiselle Hahnel,—a lady most unmeritedly shut out of the greater Opera House, I was told, by the express command of the late King. There the entertainments were as miscellaneous formerly as at one of our own legitimate theatres. One night I heard a version of Rossini's "Guillaume Tell," very tolerably performed, though obviously a work many sizes too large for the theatre. Another evening I enjoyed there a "Grosses romantisches original Zauber-Märchen," by Raimund; "Der Bauer als Millionair," a sort of *pot pourri*, made up of domestic interest and faëry sympathy;—the *comedie larmoyante* of Kotzebue, and the broad farce of the Leopoldstadt Theatre at Vienna. This would be as difficult, I suspect, to bring home to the sympathies of a British play-going audience as it once was for me to reconcile a foreign friend of mine to the suitability of a bishop's apron, or as it always is to unriddle the arm-wavings and genuflexions of a *ballet* for those unused to pantomimic narrative. I was

fresh from reading the "Fiabe" of Carlo Gozzi, where the same indefensible mixture of the real and the absurd is effected with so forcible a mastery over feeling and imagination, that *Turandot* and her three riddles, and the *Wonderful Crow*,—with their long line of other marvellous kindred,—can hardly fail to become old and familiar friends, on a first introduction, to all who have a particle of faith or fancy. Hence, besides being amused, I was interested by finding that the German world had not grown too wise to relish *extravaganzas* little less monstrous. The story of Raimund's faëry legend has the same cast as the ever-green tale of "Cinderella:" —there is a cruel father and an oppressed daughter, and the latter is under the especial care of good angels, who, to avenge *Herr Wurzel's* ill-usage of her, turn his house upside down, and his money-bags inside out — deliver her and beggar him. The tale could not be carried on, of course, for popular use, without some sentiment and cookery;* but in these essentials

* This is not said unadvisedly, but in weary remembrance of more than one "*Lust-Spiel*," where tender talking and coffee-drinking seemed entirely sufficient to keep the German public alive and amused. The fourth and last act of one comedy I shall never forget, in which, after the adventures at a watering-

we were let off easily, and it was kept alive by a fund of humour in a low comedian, Beckmann. Though many of the jokes and grimaces of this kitchen *Leporello* escaped me, enough was left and comprehended to shake my sides in concord with those of my neighbours, and to make me wonder why the familiar vein of German genius is not more largely explored by the caterers for German opera.

That its audiences are not beyond the reach of the broadest drollery, or the most simple representations of every-day life, the theatre of the country bears ample witness. But that the living writers of opera books are not further from the *repartee* or *badinage* which gives its vivacity to French dialogue, than they are from the command over interest and climax which makes even Kotzebue's domestic plays so moving,—is no less certain. In France, that sense of the ridiculous, and touch of the positive,

place of a graceful and coquettish heroine (admirably played by Mademoiselle Charlotte von Hagen) were entirely wound up, a domestic scene of winding silk and eating cakes in an arbour, as accompaniments to the delicate stratagems by which courtship may be protracted, threw every one into ecstasies, and seemed absolutely to be the portion of the evening's entertainment the most relished.

which ever intervene to save the *convenances* of the stage, give a certain point and probability to legends even as absurd as "Le Cheval de Bronze," or as repulsive as "Don Juan de Marana." On the other hand, not merely do the German librettists, when they get hold of a good subject, wander about dreamily and aimlessly among what is intractable and pointless; they appear to consider all the birds of the air and all the fishes of the sea their fair game. The success of Weber's faëry opera was in part ascribable to the national enthusiasm for the supernatural. Not less than four of Dr. Spohr's operas, "Faust," "Zemire und Azor," "Der Berggeist," and "Pietro von Abano," have been founded on legends of the same family. But the vein, besides being easily exhausted, requires consummate skill in working; and the Germans have been long reduced to gather up the scraps, as it were, of the banquet of Wonder, without having learned the art of combination. I will not weary the reader with an interminable list of operas produced since "Der Freischütz," in which sorcery and necromancy, the diabolical and the faëry world, take every conceivable form. To instance the want of selectness of

which I have complained, I need only describe the subject of one of Gläser's operas, which I narrowly missed at the *Königstadtisches Theater*, on my second visit to Berlin. This was "Der Rattenfänger von Hameln;" and as the legend is less known in England than others of its quality, I will even give a version of it, which was said and sung to me in my young days till I knew every note of it by heart; long ere my admirable friend Mr. Browning had written his "Pied Piper of Hameln: a child's story," or published the same among his "Dramatic Lyrics."

The Piper of Hameln.

At Hameln in Westphalia,
Two hundred years ago,
A tragedy was acted
That made all eyes o'erflow.

The Plague Hameln.

A legion of destructive rats
This town did sore affright:
In vain were all the dogs and cats
To put the foe to flight.

The citizens of Hameln
Were wrought into a fume,
To see such fierce invaders
Their precious grain consume.

* The legend may be found recorded in as ancient a book as the "Letters of James Howell, Esq.," written by him when in Germany (1619).

And as in lamentation
They mournfully bewailed,
Their ears with strains of music
Were suddenly assailed.

The guest.

And soon to their astonished view
The strange musician came;
All piebald was his garment,
And unknown was his name.

His pipe.

Keen was his eye, and shrill his voice,
When from his lips he drew
That pipe, whose loud mysterious notes
Such prodigies could do.

His speech.

"Ye citizens of Hameln!"
The piebald piper cried,
"To save you from destruction
My talents shall be tried;

"And every wild voracious beast
Be put to sudden flight,
If unto me most solemnly
You will your promise plight—

His bargain.

"That I a golden recompense
Shall this day twelvemonth have,
If I return unto your town
The bright reward to crave."

The men of Hameln promise:

Then loud assented every voice,
And promised every tongue;
Whilst loudly did the piebald man
Exalt his wondrous song.

and are delivered.

And as he marched with solemn step
Through the ungrateful place,
The rats, both old and young, did join
In one continuous race.

Nor when a lake appeared in view,
Did they the race refrain,
But 'midst its glassy waters sank,
Nor ever rose again!

The Piper cometh again—

Now all was ease, and mirth, and peace;
The year rolled swiftly by;
The piper came his boon to claim.
—His boon they did deny.

is disappointed.

Three days he loitered in the town,
Like one full of dismay;
And when these perjured citizens
At mass knelt down to pray,

His revenge,

The wondrous man a vengeance planned
For that forgotten plight,—
And piped such wild, melodious tones,
That every infant wight

Pursued his steps, as on he marched,
To catch the lofty strain,
Till not a baby in the town
Did very soon remain.

Each mother's darling urged the chase,
As loud the piper played;
And soon approached a lofty hill,
—No little heart dismay'd,—

When through a chasm in its side,
Each tender infant passed;
And, as it closed its fatal jaws,
The piper gave a blast.

which lasteth to this day.

Nor ever, from that day to this,
Hath he or babe returned;
But every father, conscience-struck,
The awful vengeance mourned!

The mother's hope, the father's pride,
Engulphed in one dark tomb!—
A pillar, by that dreary hill,
Alone records their doom.

R. C.

It would seem difficult to imagine how the Berlin machinists could make any effect with a story like this; even if one remembers the thrilling interest excited by the flight of the magpie with the spoon in "La Gazza Ladra." But, granting the rat procession to be an equally practicable thing, Gläser is not quite a Rossini. I was told that "Der Rattenfänger" is not the best of his productions. So far as I know his music, it seems to me to belong to the hybrid school, and to be at once dry and flimsy.

To characterize this hybrid school would not be easy—the attempt is hardly worth the trouble. But I fear it must include graver composers than Gläser. The Lachners, and Lindpaintners, and others of the hour, seem to me no less evidently at a loss for a style. And their want of this has contributed to the neglect of the public.

For the blame must not be wholly laid upon courts and cabals, that, during four months passed in Germany, in 1839-40, in towns of every size, each possessing its lyric theatre,—except the aforesaid "Der Freischütz," "Euryanthe" once at Dresden, and Gluck's "Iphigenie" at the "Huldigung" at Berlin,—I did not hear a single serious German opera!

The only writer, ancient or modern, who, to judge from play-bills and papers, seemed, in 1839-40, to have a general as distinguished from a local circulation was Herr Lortzing. I heard, in one place, his "Die Beiden Schützen," founded on a flimsy French *vaudeville;* in another, his "Caramo;" in a third, his "Czar and Zimmermann." In spite of a certain admiration for the versatile cleverness of a composer who writes the words, and sets the music, and plays a part in one of his own operas—which Lortzing did—I could not relish them. They seemed to me as utterly guiltless of genial German fancy, as the music to which Weippert might set one of our own hard-hearted fashionable novels would be innocent of English spirit—to be alike faded and feeble. I could have better borne with the most extravagant melodrame that is told in

music alternately by creeping *tremolando con sordini*, or the hoarse and overpowering blasts of three trombones! Neither the exercise of mastering that which is dry and difficult (which in certain moods of mind has its charms), nor the disrespectable pleasure derived from what is pretty and enticing, though of doubtful *character*, was to be enjoyed in such music by Lortzing as I heard.—If "Le Macon" and "Le Postillon," in their German dress, reminded me of the Scotch lady's tea in a tureen, these indigenous comic operas bore a strong resemblance to the same beverage, as I have seen it exhibited in old-fashioned German villages, where a pinch of greenish-gray dust, in whitey-brown paper, is solemnly laid before the gasping traveller; and the water follows in an open pan, smoking and smoked—where tea in short, is no tea at all!

1853.—Since the above was written, Herr Lortzing has passed away; his death having taken place some few years since. Herr Conradin Kreutzer, too, is dead!—Musically, neither the one nor the other is a loss. Though the "Nachtlager" of the latter may be said to keep

the stage, if only because it furnishes a favourite part for Herr Pischek, it is by right of an indifference on the part of the public—and this is almost less hopeful, as a sign, than undeserved popularity would be.—The light operas by new writers, which have been most universally accepted throughout Germany in later years, have been the poor "Stradella," and the still poorer "Martha," by Flotow—flat music in the French style, without sparkle or science—and certain of the productions of Mr. Balfe. It is difficult to conceive why some among the gay artists of South Germany—such as Herr Mayseder or Herr Strauss—have never tried to throw their elegant melodies and lively thoughts into the form of comic operas easy to produce, and in tune with the sympathies of the public that they have found the secret of charming under other forms. One such writer might exercise an incalculable theatrical influence. Meanwhile grimness, and obscurity, and exaggeration, and a total disproportion of the works represented to the means and materials disposable, prevail everywhere. I have seen the "Robert le Diable," of Meyerbeer, played at the tiny theatre of Freyburg, in the Breisgau—a place of amusement many de-

grees smaller than our St. James' Theatre. There are few tours more depressing—from the prevalence of mediocrity, and the absence of nationality—than a round among the minor opera-houses of Germany, though our tourists have been apt to laud the entertainment because of its cheapness. They have done so without inquiring how far they would be contented with an equivalent in any of their own provincial towns at home.

CHAPTER IV.

QUARTETTS AND AMATEURS.—1839.

Quartett playing—The Zimmermann quartett—Berlin amateurs—The sister and the mother of Mendelssohn—Female musical accomplishment—The *Sing-Academie*—Notice of Fasch its founder—The building—The performances—Spontini's compliment—The decadence of the *Sing-Academie* since 1839.

WHATEVER influences constraint and disunion, patronage capriciously bestowed, and authority turned into an engine of cabal, may have exercised in the Prussian capital to the deterioration of its opera, they have still not been able to destroy a spirit of strong musical vitality, taking forms too exclusively German to be passed over. There was admirable chamber-music to be heard in Berlin in 1839-40 — quartett-playing, worth a journey thither to seek; to say nothing of that magnificent institution, the offspring of Fasch, and the god-child of Zelter—the *Sing-Academie*.

I visited Berlin in 1839, during its flat season, when the amateurs were taking health at some *brunnen* or other, or pastime among that fine scenery which the Germans enjoy so heartily. The court was at Potsdam for the reviews, with its army of fiddlers in attendance. To a Londoner, then, who is accustomed to the utter pause and desolation which September brings—when the one-eyed street musician, who hobbles along his doleful way, scraping out his surgical tunes, is about the only specimen of the genus Violin to be found; when every *Cello* is holidaying it in the provinces, or gone home to Germany to recruit himself; when even Golden Square, that centre of instrumental study, is as guiltless of melody as a Friend's meeting-house—it was a welcome surprise, and an evidence of the wealth of the city, that, at such a stagnant time, to collect a quartett was possible, even to the active hospitality to which I was so largely indebted. Yet more remarkable it seemed, that, when collected, the quartett should be one of such rare excellence as our own metropolis could not then match in the very prime of its fullest season.

Excellent, indeed, was Herr Zimmermann's party, beyond any quartett at that time known

to me. I shortly afterwards heard Herr David lead a similar force at Leipsic, in a yet finer style. Admirable was their rendering of Beethoven's quartett in E flat, No. 11—excellent for ease, breadth, and boldness in the *allegro*—for consentaneous playfulness in the *scherzo;* for deep yet uncaricatured expression in the slow movement.—Then, Herr Zimmerman's party could throw due passion and fire into Mendelssohn's quartett in E minor which followed, with just that touch of old-world quaintness which many of his secondary subjects demand—and lastly, display the requisite French fineness, without French conceit, in the quintett by Onslow—one of Onslow's later and more elaborate works—which wound up the evening.—It was impossible to partake of such a treat without the liveliest and most pleasurable excitement. After all, there is nothing like chamber-music, heard in one's own chair, and among one's own friends,—music that one can at pleasure stop when the spirit grows dull, and that goes on without that anxious straining after effect, of which, in presence of the public, few if any artists are able utterly to divest themselves.

This admirable quartett was only one among

many which, in 1839, Berlin afforded for the delight of the winter evening circles of those who were not sold to the exotic opera, and could enjoy, intelligently, music which, according to the estimation of too many who have fancied themselves amateurs, is of little use save to make "Quintilian stare and gasp." Herr Zimmermann's party would hardly have played the exquisite and widely-varying compositions of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Onslow with such expression, and spirit, and unction, had not intelligence been quickened and study encouraged by the attentive and refined sympathy of their audience. "The amateurs in Berlin," says my pleasant predecessor, the author of the "Ramble among the Musicians of Germany," "are all little *maestri;* they dabble in composition, have most of them the score of a mass, sinfonia, or overture, locked up in their desks, the consciousness of which helps to sweeten their lives, and gives them the smiling satisfaction which Mr. Bickerstaff discovered in the girl who wore embroidered garters." So much as this I had no means of discovering; but I found traces of taste and knowledge every where, and know that they possessed one

amateur *pianiste* and composer of no ordinary force and feeling. I allude to Madame Hensel, the sister of Mendelssohn, whose sudden death (in the midst of her music) gave to her brother's over-wrought nerves and wasted frame, the shock from which he never recovered—which, indeed, hastened his own decease.—This cherished sister, Fanny, had been the companion of the great musician's pursuits, during the years of childhood, in the days when they used to take five-minute lessons together — and in later days, also, when (as I have heard him tell) they vied with each other which could best execute a certain difficult left hand passage in Kalkbrenner's "Effusio Musica" (which, by the way, Kalkbrenner sometimes played as an improvisation). Had Madame Hensel been a poor man's daughter, she must have become known to the world by the side of Madame Schumann and Madame Pleyel, as a female pianist of the very highest class. Like her brother, she had, in her composition, a touch of that southern vivacity which is so rare among the Germans. More feminine than his, her playing bore a strong family resemblance to her brother's in its fire, neatness, and solidity. Like

himself, too, she was as generally accomplished as she was specially gifted.

Now that all are gone, when I am speaking of that most delightful artistic musical circle of Berlin—the one she adorned and animated—it is fitting, and not indelicate, to speak, too, of the head of the family house, to whom Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn owed so much of all that made them charming: the excellent and accomplished mother of the composer. There have lived few women more honourably distinguished than she was by acquirement—by that perfect propriety which Horace Walpole has justly called the grace of declining life—by a cordial hospitality, the sincerity of which there was no mistaking—by an easy humour in conversation, a knowledge of men and books, and a lively interest in the younger generation, which at her age is only formed in the brightest and the best of their species. It is true that she had no common motive for keeping pace with the world of Europe in the fame of her son, and in the brilliant succession of guests whom her daughter assembled,—but, apart from this, she possessed a fund of intelligence, a habit of mind bred amidst constant intercourse with

the best things and persons of all countries, which belonged to herself and remained with her to the last. With such a mother, and such a brother, it was hardly likely that one like Madame Hensel should bury her talents in a napkin, or let them waste. Her morning-music will be spoken of and recollected with cordial regret by all who retrace the story of the art in Berlin during the first half of this century.

I shall never think of the life-size oil sketches taken from life in Rome, which in 1840 adorned the *studio* of Professor Hensel, without recalling the running accompaniment (as it were) of the graceful and solid compositions in which his wife also called up her characteristic remembrances of her Italian journey. And the delight with which she spoke of her brother, and the cordiality with which she welcomed his friends from England, are as vividly present to me now, when I write, as if I had only an instant since seen her bright face (the *Miriam* of her husband's picture),—had only just heard the pleasant racy English, "You will excuse my poor little music of my own," with which she opened her piano.—It will be long before Berlin, or any other capital, can show a musical

circle more delightfully composed, or animated by brighter presiding spirits than that of Madame Hensel.

Generally, however, the solidity of female musical accomplishment in Germany is one of the surest evidences of the deep root which the art maintains in the land. For, be it remembered, this knowledge is found in a society where the housewifery, which has been too largely banished from our female education, is practised with a cheerful self-complacency — where every room bears tokens of the tapestry-working diligence of its female inmates,—and where in every circle the Englishman runs a good chance of being relieved from his uncouth struggles at German phraseology by being addressed clearly and elegantly in his own language. How, in spite of the gratuitous demolition of time, caused by early and frequent and long-protracted meals, the German ladies work, upon chairs, screens, and ottomans, so many scenes from the Scott novels, so many sentences of the Language of Flowers—speak so many languages—and understand Music so thoroughly —is a mystery I am unable to this day to solve.

A splendid vocal testimony to their artistic

accomplishments is the often-adverted-to *Académie* founded by Fasch, and brought to perfection by that good man of Berlin—Goethe's friend, and Mendelssohn's master—the upright, intelligent, and liberal Zelter.

Of the services rendered by the latter to Art, and his claim to be numbered among the worthies of German music, as a man of many gifts and pursuits, from all of which he drew something of aliment and support for the one to which his life was devoted, the English public already knows something. The fund of golden precepts which his letters contain—the honest, zealous, affectionate heart which they display, have in some measure been opened to us by critics and translators. The name of Fasch is less known. It is true that, when Dr. Burney was in Berlin, he was then harpsichord player to Frederick the Great; but some unlucky accident hindered the two from ever meeting; and it is a question whether Burney would have appreciated much in Fasch beyond his fluency of finger upon his instrument. The real musical spirit of Germany, up to that epoch, most strikingly illustrated by the compositions of Sebastian Bach, was but ill comprehended by the courtly and elegant bio-

grapher of Metastasio; and though the works of Fasch, as far as I know them, be not altogether guiltless of the Italian cadences and flourishes which were gathered and combined in the writings of most of the composers of the time, the man seems to have been a true German. Not, however, one of those rough, vigorous sons of his country, with a strong mind in a sound body —working hard and hopefully, and taking Life as it comes, without being vexed with the "fever of vain longing,"—who make such excellent pillars to the fabric of Art;—but crotchetty, fantastic; as earnest in dreaming as in working. Born at Zerbst, in the year 1736, the son of an elder Fasch, who wrote oratorios, and an opera "Berenice" (like all other ancient German operas, long since forgotten), his zealous and enthusiastic spirit took so devout a direction in music, after hearing a sacred composition by Zelenka, at Dresden, that his father interdicted his frequenting the churches, lest he should become a Catholic. The current of such aspirations must have been strangely checked by his being appointed, in the year 1756, at the instance of Francis Benda, as accompanist to the flute *solos* and *concertos* of the philosophical

King of Prussia. Small encouragement for his religious dispositions was to be found in the sybaritic cabinets of Potsdam! Whether from having fallen into an ungenial soil, or whether benumbed by a settled engagement, bringing with it a competency—a condition which has proved as fatal to many a German ambition, as if hunger and thirst were the best incentives to Genius—it matters little. Many of the years of Fasch, however, were trifled away among shadows: some in imaginary experiments to improve the arts of warlike attack and defence; some in *building card-houses*, a passion analogous to that of Winter's for dressing up puppet-show Calvaries; some in arranging a table of colours, by which means a *farben clavier* (harpsichord of colours) should be constructed. At another period, he was in the habit of ascertaining, by arithmetical calculations, undertaken the first thing in the morning, whether he was fit to compose that day, or merely to untie those technical puzzles in which the Donnes and Quarleses of Music have always found a whimsical delight. We are told that he was subject to frequent fits of self-despondency; and would destroy his compositions as soon as they were finished. It seems as if his genius

hardly entered freely and fearlessly on its own proper path till he had reached a late period of life, when the fruits of a journey to Italy, and the composition of a sixteen-part mass, in emulation of Orazio Benevoli's famous composition, led him to the resolution of organizing an amateur society, which remained to be as unique as it was distinguished among musical establishments during a long period.

Certainly it is not saying too much, that the performance I heard at the *Sing-Academie*, in 1839, was worthy of its *habitat*. Concert-room and chorus seemed to me both in the first style of art. The former, by Herr Ottmer—a long, cheerful, resonant chamber, richly decorated, with its orchestra at one end, and its wide open space in the midst of the room—took the air of a private saloon, from the ease and good-nature with which its members chatted and talked: those indisposed to singing, lounging on the benches; those who were less indolent, joining the orchestra. There was no ceremony, no stiffness, no time lost in wrangling for parts: each one seemed to know his appointed place. The conductor, Herr Rungenhagen, struck a chord on a Collard pianoforte, and off started up-

wards of two hundred voices in one of Haydn's clear and jubilant motetts, with a sweetness, a certainty, and a refinement, I had then never heard elsewhere. I felt this all the more from having generally remarked that the quality of the stage voices I had heard in Germany was guttural and metallic. What amateurs lose in power, they perhaps gain, when well cultivated, in delicacy. It is hard, indeed, to believe that the diction of instructed persons, occupying themselves for their pleasure in works which, being analogous to the highest strains of poetry, give scope for conception as well as correctness, should not be superior to the delivery of a body which at best can feel but indistinctly—and at worst, is but impressed mechanically with the semblance of feeling. If my notion be reasonable, the critical spirit of Berlin, by making its amateurs fastidious as to *nuance*, may here have shown its bright side.

Mendelssohn's beautiful psalm, "As pants the Hart," was next admirably sung. Then came a complicated composition by Fasch, which, as I heard it, was charming, but which, if entrusted to a less sensitive body of choristers, must fail in its effect. It often happens that

in the world of Art, as in every other condition and passage of life, the balance seems to be kept even; and that overweening ascendancy is often provided against by the fact, that extreme perfection in the executive machine is apt to tempt the creator away from thoughts to details! The excellence of such a body of singers as the Berlin amateurs present, is certain to seduce one writing expressly for it, into such combinations as can be no where else executed. It was a double, perhaps even a quadruple chorus that I heard, supporting a high silvery voice throughout a florid *solo*, with orchestral richness and certainty. I was lost in wonder at the feat; but, on coming away, neither chord nor theme was in my ears. How different was this from my first introduction to the close of Handel's "Israel"—weakly played on the pianoforte, and sung by a handful of coarse and melancholy singers! Yet the leading phrase of *that* chorus niched itself in my ear, and will remain there till it loses its retentive faculty.

The *solo* was admirably sung by a *débutante*; and it was a pretty sight, when the concert broke up, to see every one crowding round her with words of praise and encouragement. All

seemed union and good understanding there: and by way of a last sanction to the young lady, as one inevitably destined for great things, Spontini approached her with his blandest smile, and a most dulcet "Voilà une véritable *Agnes von Hohenstauffen!*" The force of applause could no further go.

In the year 1839, the *Sing-Academie* consisted of about five hundred members, who met once a week,—a separate practice being held for the younger and less assured portion of its singers. Admission was made contingent on a certain amount of musical acquirement and vocal gift. It was necessary, too, that since their beautiful room had cost more money than the amateurs had to spend, they should give public performances from time to time to keep the debt down. On these occasions they called in orchestral aid.

As I strolled down the Linden that evening, listening to the merry talk of the groups as they parted for their homes, and my ears full of a choral harmony finer in quality than they had ever before received, all my cavillings against Berlin were forgotten; and, in the humour of the French widow who heard in the church

bells an encouraging "*Prends ton valet*," the clocks, as they chimed seven, seemed to say to me mockingly, "*You can't do that in England!*"

The clocks of 1853 would sing a different cuckoo-song, were one to listen to them as chroniclers:—they might now chime, "*We can do more in England*," to the pilgrim, supposing him to be bent on national self-assertion as earnestly as I was bent on national improvement, when they teased me as above. But the story to be told is not how popular musical taste at home has risen rapidly, spread widely, and chosen wisely during the last dozen years. More to the purpose of these pages is it to add, that, even in 1839, the *Sing-Academie* was spoken of by the amateurs of Berlin as being in a state of dowagership, if not decadence. The rumours of schisms, want of concord, supineness of direction, which in those days I disregarded, as belonging to the generally depreciating tone which pervaded all intercourse in the Prussian capital, have, I fear, since 1839 been confirmed; and the *Sing-*

Academie has fallen from its old high place among European musical establishments. It is needless to point out how, in a society rent to its centre and rotted to its core by the discomforts and discontents which bore such fatal and fruitless fruit in the year of Revolutions, the pleasant bonds of brotherhood which are indispensable to amateur co-operation, must of necessity be twisted awry and slackened. People wrangling about ideas rather than ascertaining what may be the consequences of their adoption, and planning popular movements ere they decide who is to be leader, are, naturally enough, careless about concords. Instead of escaping into the world of Art as into a place where spirits are refreshed, they are apt to take their grievances and disputes thither with them; and thus the unsocial social state of Prussia, doubtless, had its influences on the *Sing-Academie*, as upon all other peaceful institutions having no political tendency. But that its old age—not to say decay—was hastened largely by musical pedantry, cabal, exclusiveness, and favouritism, has been largely suggested by every notice that I have been able to take or to gather, concerning art and amateurship in Berlin, since

my visits of 1839-40. There are certain seeds which, however long they lie in the ground without being quickened, *will* come up sooner or later; and the narrow counsels which at one period of Art may be harmless, perhaps safe, perhaps even indispensable,—at another period are certain warrants and signals for its downfall and ruin.

CHAPTER V.

THE "HULDIGUNG" AT BERLIN.—1840.

The "Huldigung" at Berlin—Night journey—Agreeable company—Hôtel de Petersburg—Table-talk—Gluck's "Iphigenia in Tauris"—Mademoiselle von Fassmann—Disappointing performance—Exhibition of pictures—Illuminations.—*Postscript*—The operas of Gluck — Some attempt to characterize his genius.

I MADE another effort in the year 1840 to gratify one of my strongest musical wishes, with the earnest hope, too, of changing my first year's opinion of the Berlin opera, and of bringing my voice into concord with theirs who had described that theatre as affording the choicest music, executed in the most magnificent perfection.

I was at Leipsic on a drizzling, dreary Thursday afternoon, in October 1840, the very weather to make an invalid—many days' distant

from his own books and music, and stared at by the cold, glazed, sombre stove instead of being smiled on by his fire (that only companion with whom one is never at odds)—anticipate an evening of choice chamber-music, and the *carte blanche* "to do just as he liked," with particular *gusto*. "How unfortunate you are!" said Mendelssohn, who came in to pay me a friendly visit. "They have changed the opera at Berlin to-morrow night, and are going to give Gluck's 'Iphigenia in Tauris.' The letter has only just come. Eckert has taken a stall for you: you could have got there in time. What a pity you cannot go!"

This was in the week of the "Huldigung," when the nobles of Prussia had prepared for the new king in their metropolis those shows which the limited boundaries of Königsberg, where the monarch was crowned, rendered impossible. Every day's *schnellpost* had brought us its new promise of the splendours of the *fête*—such illuminations as had never been kindled before—and such a ball as no mortal sovereign had ever been bidden to, with concerts, *tableaux*, speeches, a supper—and *such* a production, by way of nationality, of Auber's pretty, but feeble, "Lac

des Fées" at the Grand Opera House. But a ball in autumn, in a strange town, was not one of the delights calculated "my mind to move" away from the quieter pleasures I was enjoying; and I had seen the opera in Paris, done in all perfection by Mademoiselle Nau, and MM. Duprez and Levasseur.*

There was no lying still, however, when I was within four-and-twenty hours of Berlin with one of Gluck's operas to be given. On the contrary, the name acted as tonic and cordial: and I had been told I *could* not go. Next to the invitation of a long-desired treat to a *fanatico*, there is no spur like his incapacity being taken for granted by kind counsellors. At six o'clock I was leaving Leipsic for a night's journey to Berlin.

What a night's journey that was! The North German system of conveyance, which

* This opera seems a favourite one in Germany on festival occasions. It was the one selected for performance in Stuttgart, by way of welcome to the young Crown Princess of Würtemburg, when she was brought home as a bride. Even with the advantage of an elegant *prologue*, written for the occasion by Herr Dingelstedt, it seemed a curious mistake to offer a *spectacle*-opera to one who, as the Grand Duchess Olga of Russia, had been habituated to a stage-gorgeousness only attainable when a Czar is paymaster at the theatre. 1853.

was bound to purvey for every traveller a seat in a carriage—in this indescribably convenient for one who *must* get forward—could not sweep the roads clear of mud, and did not undertake that the *bei chaisen*, to which we were obliged to have recourse, should be better vehicles than the one in which the redoubtable *Knockicroghery* drew *Lord Glenthorn* in Miss Edgeworth's inimitable "Ennui." The rain, which had for many days been coming down in torrents, that night "fell as if the world were drowned." Half of my fellow-travellers, some forty in number, were wet through before leaving the Leipsic post-house,—the process being pretty well completed at the first stage, where, on stepping out to change carriages, some of us plunged mid-leg deep into the inky streams with which the high road was covered. Ere we had proceeded for a couple of posts on our way, matters had become too desperate for complaint,—for all, at least, who had not the solace of tobacco—that German bosom-friend! The fumes of "the weed" mingled with the steams from the smoking upper-benjamins and cloaks of the males, and the strong odours of eatables from the provident *sacs* of the gentler

moiety of the caravan. It was a relief, after two hours of such a Black Hole, in a close six-inside vehicle, to be transferred to an open *britska;* though this was not so screened by rotten curtains of oil-cloth, which refused to draw, but that the icy, steely rain searched every corner of it out.—After all, such nights, even with rheumatic aches to boot, are worse when described than they are when endured. Mine, on the road to the "Huldigung," had its redeeming point, despite the showers and the tobacco-smoke, and a foot which felt like a weight of lead—only that lead is incapable of twinges. The intelligent and sprightly conversation of a lady casually encountered—one of those distinguished women whose age, whatever that be, is the only admirable age, and whose country is intellectual Europe—was worth much inconvenience and a little pain, and has survived in my recollection the bodily suffering, the bitter air, and the blighting rain.

Most disastrous was the work wrought by the latter element on the road. At Delitsch and Bitterfeld, and all the other little towns on the Prussian side of the frontier, the national fancy for garlands had displayed itself, and

attempts to do honour to the festival by illumination had been made. Only one lamp in three was sputtering out a faint and feeble flame; and when the night-wind rustled the leaves of the evergreen wreaths, a deluge was discharged on the heads of those entering or issuing from the doors thus graced. The early dawn showed a wretchedly chill and dripping scene; and though, as the day grew older, the sun came out, and the clouds were tossed hither and thither in vast and parti-coloured masses, so as to exhibit a ground of blue sky, the weather remained, to the very gates of Berlin, wild and ungenial—the very worst pageant-weather imaginable. And the holiday dress of the stately city gave a bleak and desolate air of mockery to the draggled crowds under umbrellas that caught the eye whichever way it went.

After driving about for an hour, and, for the one only time in my German experiences, being encountered by extortion in its grossest forms, in despair I found quarters where I should least have expected to find them, in the Hôtel de Petersburg, under the Linden. Service and ministry of every comfort (and truly I required

both) were there afforded me as promptly as if I had been one of the *Grafs*, or Princes, or Countesses, whose plumed *chasseurs*, striding about in every direction among their plumed lords and ladies, gave the court-yard an appearance which whimsically reminded me of Lance's capital picture of the tormented jackdaw among the peacocks. If every preparation had not been spoilt by the rain, the show must have been magnificent. I never saw so many fine-looking men in the same narrow space, or so many gorgeous uniforms; and the ladies were some of them well worth looking at, and received the compliment as a matter of course. These gay apparitions, taken in conjunction with food, rest, and warmth, restored me to a belief that a festivity at Berlin must be a very brilliant thing, and that the performance of Gluck's opera could hardly fail to be worth the journey, and the fascinating chamber-music I had left behind me.

Of the earlier ceremonies I heard nothing to make me regret having missed them. The King had been kept in the cathedral by a clergyman who had never heard the aphorism, "that no gentleman can keep his congregation enter-

tained longer than twenty minutes;" and, on issuing thence, and taking his place on the throne erected in front of the Palace to receive the homages of his people, he had been reminded of his mortality most cruelly. A sudden burst of the malicious element had drenched the fine clothes of the courtiers, laid flat their feathers, and, streaming down the monarch's face, had given it, according to the loyal *Master Lane-hams* of the Berlin press, only an additional serenity and intellectual glory! "Well," I said, hugging myself with a stupid security, as all these melancholy details were laid before me, "the rain cannot at least have washed away the violoncellos and flutes of the orchestra. Perhaps I was unjust to Mademoiselle von Fassmann last year. I am going to hear Gluck in all his glory!"

A promise not easy to be kept, as regards that Milton of Music; for—orchestral intricacy and its exigencies laid aside—the art has perhaps no works demanding a higher union of all the powers which captivate, and all that impress, than the grand lyrical dramas of the composer of "Iphigenia in Tauris." I know that the master-pieces loved and learned late in one's career are

apt to be unduly prized—that, till the time when fond Memory takes the place of judgment, and declares nothing to be so delicious or perfect as the music that charmed us twenty years ago, Imagination and Conceit combine to heighten the *gusto* with which works, traditionally considered crabbed, severe, and above common sympathy, are enjoyed. It is a compliment to our own far-sightedness to believe, that *we* have the thorough key to their mysteries; and I feel jealous lest, on egotistic and selfish grounds, I may value Gluck's opera-music too highly, because it is one of the last musical acquisitions I have made, and because the making of it cost me some trouble—not forgetting that night of rain in *bei chaisen!*

Yet my anticipations had, at the very outset, to abate much of their first excitement. I was met in Berlin with the blanking information, that the opera was to be given in the *Schauspiel-haus*, with an orchestra and chorus smaller than those of the Grand Opera. The latter had been bespoken for the ball. Still I took my seat in the *balcon* of the smaller theatre, though blanked, not hopeless. The work, performed by official command, and during the coronation

festivities of a monarch who had already given indications of strong and large musical sympathies, could surely (I thought) not fail to be well given.

Alas! let no one count upon Royalty being stronger than Luck! The overture to "Iphigenia in Aulis," not remarkably well played, passed over;—and after it the symphony of the storm, in the midst of which the Priestess enters, upon as fine a vocal burst as was ever planned by composer for the introduction of his *prima donna*. But my ear waited and waited in vain. A sound, at once harsh, tough, and feeble, ill represented that splendid invocation of awe and terror; and, but for seeing the distinctive *bandeau* and wreath, and mystery of many veils (traditionally, as the reader knows, copied from Milder), I should never have separated the heroine of the piece from the host of screaming satellites who crowded round her, by any predominance of tone, manner, or gesture. It was the very same Mademoiselle von Fassmann that I had journalized, and none other!—a year worse in voice than she had been in 1839, and not a day better in method than when she dragged Weber's exquisite *cantabiles* out of shape.

The opera was produced with care in stage arrangements, and liberality as to numbers and costume.* The Scythians danced their ferocious measures in costumes well nigh as savage as those of the *tape-durs*† who lorded it in the pits of the French theatres during the days of terror. The Furies, who, by a permissible

* The probability, as well as liberality, of the German stage arrangements struck me forcibly whenever I entered a theatre. One of the most real presentments I ever saw was the scene at Berlin, without the cathedral, in the fourth act of Schiller's "Joan of Arc," where the booming of the bells, and the measured thunder of artillery, and the flourishes of wind-music, wafted past on the air, and then trodden out by the sound of many feet, were given with a reality which imposed upon the senses by its force—enhancing the effect of that splendid scene. Modern drama, save perhaps the tremendous interview between *Thekla* and the soldier in "Wallenstein's Death," has nothing more moving than the meeting of *Joan of Arc* and her sisters, with her dogged, credulous father, who curses her for a wicked sorceress. The acting of the play, as I saw it, was very bad; the Maid of Orleans being personated by a middle-aged woman, little more sylphid in figure than our own Mrs. Glover: but the scene alluded to, as a scene, excited and affected me deeply.

† "The *Tape-durs*," says the English editor of M. Fleury's translated "Memoirs of the French Stage," "amused themselves by making a noise in the theatre; singing, or rather roaring, their patriotic songs to the annoyance of all who were less boisterously inclined than themselves. They had not acquired their title of *Tape-dur* quite so early as the 10th of August, but they had long laboured to deserve it. These janisaries of the Revolu-

license, are preternaturally multiplied in the scene of the vision of *Orestes*, were sufficiently frightful and ghastly. Nevertheless, in the splenetic mood engendered by vexation and want of sleep, I had fault to find with them also. They were too tangible, too prominent: instead of being hid among enveloping shadows, with a head or an arm at intervals more distinctly evident—an effect entirely attainable, as many a French *ballet* will testify—they stood as nakedly out as though they had been so many men and women, applying their snakes to the tormented dreamer, as a chorus of hospital-surgeons might have done. I would have forgiven them this, however, had they only satisfied the ear, and sung in tune; but even this simple excellence was withheld. The chorus was, throughout, false and coarse: perhaps, on the principle of the white-linen madness of *Tilburina's* confidante, to follow the example set by their sovereign priestess.

tion wore a peculiar livery: it consisted of wide pantaloons and short waistcoats, with a strange kind of cap, covered with fox-skin, and falling down over the broad shoulders of the wearer; who, moreover, carried about with him, as an auxiliary to this elegant costume, a large knotted stick, which was styled *a constitution*."

With her I could only have been satisfied could I have been contented with posture-making, in place of personation. It is true that the graceful and statuesque foldings of her veil changed with every moment to a new and more effective arrangement, but this was done so obviously and anxiously as to convince me that there lay *Iphigenia's* heart and treasure: and I could not, for the sake of such drapery-work, forgive defective musical intonation, and the want of that impulse and geniality which (no matter how it be manifested) *must* contribute its share to every performance as distinguished from an exercise. Those might be Milder's robings, but Milder's Greek fire was absent; and the audience ended as it began the evening—cold and respectful, but unsympathizing. It was with an effort that I could remain to see "the charm wound up."

It will serve no good purpose to dwell on the rest of the performance—on the antiquity of Herr Bader's voice, and the unsuitability of his figure for the part of *Orestes*. Herr Mantius, as *Pylades*, delighted me by contrast; and the sweetness of his voice struck me so welcomely as to add another to the long list of assurances

that my first year's impressions of the Berlin Opera were neither sarcastic nor uncharitable. As I crept home to bed, more weary in mind than in body, I made a covenant with myself never again to leave a certain pleasure for an uncertain opera eighteen hours off—even though the name of Gluck, and the reputation of a metropolis at high festival-tide, conspire to beckon me.

Betimes in the next morning I went across to the Exhibition to spend an hour, before visits could be admissible, among the modern painters of Berlin. The show was confessedly meagre and inferior—indebted to French artists for some of its cardinal attractions. But one picture, of sweet and delicate fancy, so haunted me as to stand out like a bright spot in the not very bright recollections of the public sights of those two days. It was a very small work by Steinbrück; which, perhaps, I relished all the more from having admired the original sketch a day or two before in ——'s album. The subject was a little girl among elves. The vagrant child has sailed away in a boat, not caring whither, and the waters have floated her into one of those deep woodland recesses where the

stream, overhung with trees, is yet more intimately canopied by the large fan-like leaves of water-plants, so thickly interlacing each other as wholly to prohibit day from coming through, save in a green, tempered light—the very atmosphere of Elf-land! Thus entrapped, the maiden is surrounded by the small creatures of the place. One has leaped into the prow of her shallop—another holds up a rosy shell full of nectar-dew—while a band of yet more graceful creatures, linked hand-in-hand, do their part in arresting her progress, offering her garlands, and gifts, and courtesies. Never was encouragement for truancy so exquisitely painted! The child of Earth is, however, not wholly at ease with her playmates: she stands upright in the midst of the band, half fearful, half pleased. Her sober eye contradicts her saucy lip; and she looks round her with a demure and suspicious glance, as if she knew she was only half worthy of, or only half believed in, the earnest and pretty welcome arranged for her greeting. The picture worthily illustrated one of Tieck's exquisite legends;—and, like the mermaid-music in Weber's "Oberon," or the leading phrase in Mendelssohn's delicious

overture to " Melusine," haunts me to this day with the remembrance of its airy grace and fantastic sweetness.

If I gave the Germans credit for pre-eminence in the fantastic vein in the morning, the illuminations of the evening, incomplete as they were—a *réchauffé* of preparations spoiled by the rain of the preceding night,—riveted me in the conviction that in some things they outdo us in the picturesque. The pair of domes belonging to the churches in the *Gens d'Armes Platz*, which, with the *Schauspiel-haus*, make such an effective architectural group from whatever side contemplated, were surrounded with rings of blue and crimson and yellow light—less brilliant than the gas illuminations which, with us, produce such strong contrasts when relieved against the intense sky of night, but of a more harmonious variety and sweetness. The bronzes, again, on the cornice of the Museum were, by some unseen contrivance, so felicitously presented, that the figures seemed balanced in air upon a field of light. I paused long to admire them. It was tantalizing to be compelled to take up my staff and return, just when the elements had begun

to show more clemency, and when every kind voice was inviting me to remain for the magnificent *fête*, the preparations for which in the Opera House* had so cruelly traversed my desire to see a work of Gluck's worthily represented.—But the temptation was not to be yielded to; and I set forth to return to Leipsic, through another night of *bei-chaisen* and tobacco-smoke, gratified to have a pleasant parting impression of a city which I fear I may be thought to have visited in not precisely that amiable and placable frame of mind which should distinguish the *fanatico*,—or his love for "the concord of sweet sounds" means nought, if Shakespeare was a true poet.

* This festivity furnished another proof of that closer love of the picturesque on the part of the Germans than we possess, and their more constant desire to give Art its due place in all pageants and public celebrations, to which allusion has been already made. One of the principal features at the ball was a series of *tableaux vivans*, arranged by the most eminent painters of Berlin, representing scenes and groups from the history of Brandenburg, beginning with the days of Frederic I., Burggrave of Nuremburg (1417), and coming down to one of Frederic the Great's Potsdam concerts, with a flute solo, performed as in order due; and Mara's nightingale air, "Mi paventi," executed by Mademoiselle Löwe. This representation had been preluded by the performance of Gluck's overture to "Armida," and a prologue spoken by Madame Crelinger.

Postscript.—Such was a performance in the capital of Prussia, on a state occasion, of one of the most royal works, put forth by one of the greatest kings of Music—poor enough, it will be owned, to disappoint any one that took with him to Germany a wholesale and preconceived conviction of universal reverence and sedulousness in performance, if not of infallible wisdom in selection.—Since 1840, however, I have heard certain of Gluck's operas given at Berlin on a grander scale. The impression produced by the performances in question, has been such as to make it a duty, after publishing a chapter like the above, to do compensating honour to the theatre which has persisted, and which still persists, in keeping alive the recollection and the tradition of musical drama in its highest, purest, and most living form.

This is all the more incumbent since the operas of Gluck can only be studied as they deserve by being heard and seen; and, moreover, under conditions of careful and magnificent presentation. The most experienced and imaginative of readers will derive from the closest perusal of the scores of Gluck's operas, feeble and distant impressions of their power

and beauty. The delicious charm of Mozart's melody—the expressive nobility of Handel's ideas—may, in some measure, be comprehended by the student at the pianoforte; and the eye may assure the reader how masterly is the symmetry of the vocal score with one,—how rich and complete is the management of the instrumental score, with the other master. But this is in no respect the case with "Alceste," the two "Iphigenies," and "Armide"—it may be added, with almost any opera written according to the canons of French taste. That which appears thin, bald, severe, when it is merely perused, is filled up, brightens, enchants, excites, and satisfies, when it is heard with action,—to a degree only to be believed upon experience. Out of the theatre, three-fourths of Gluck's individual merit is lost. He wrote for the stage; and when he has been judged in the closet, he has been either half judged, or else curiously misunderstood. His very excellence, his force, his grandeur, his completeness in accomplishing the end proposed, may be said to have stood betwixt him and his lawful fame. It becomes a nice point to decide which is the greater—that work of Art, which is supreme in

the place and for the purpose to which it was destined, but which when turned to other uses, is fragmentary, poor in suggestion, and barren of pleasure,—or that work of Art, less incontestibly faultless in its special position, which shall yield beauty in a thousand forms and a thousand places, when it is divided, considered in detail, adapted, transcribed. The former will be open to exception as stronger in effect than in idea; but then the latter must bear the reproach of possessing ideas out of proportion with the effect produced.

These are among the nicest points of criticism—only, perhaps, to be touched when the mood is critical, when we are willing to examine our pleasures, and to be lectured concerning their real import and nature. Yet the touching of them from time to time, has its use; whatever be thought of the unauthorized or irreverent hand that attempts to adjust the scales, and may be blamed for meddling with reputations.—I am the more willing to hazard reproof in this matter, from an intense and earnest conviction that, in England, Gluck has never enjoyed due renown, as the greatest of great opera composers. Our passion for

Mozart, largely justified by the wide field of that delicious poet's triumphs, has led us to injustice, not only as regards Handel, Rossini, and Beethoven, who have all been exposed to some disparaging comment in England, because they were not Mozart—but signally so as regards Mozart's superior in the highest forms of musical drama. He has been admitted to be grand, impassioned, awful, intelligent, and pertinent in the adaptation of sound to sense—but he has not received due credit for beauty, grace, skill, and variety. There must, and I hope sincerely there will, come a time of greater clear-sightedness in this matter.

Such advent—it is possible to think, and instructive to remark—may have been retarded by the very means adopted by Gluck to set himself in a clear light before the world. In how few cases have the poets been able to criticize themselves without harming themselves, and arming their antagonists! With something of the feeling of a persecuted man—with some of the covert bitterness engendered by the expectation of long-denied fame—the composer of "Alceste" could not give out that opera without alluding, almost in caricature, to the abuses which Fashion,

and the caprices of Italian singers, had introduced into opera; and without setting forth, with a somewhat exaggerated severity, his own uncompromising proceedings, whereby (to speak fantastically) the *Samson* common-sense was to be delivered from the *Dalilah* "sing-song." Thus, as it were, Gluck pinioned himself to the mission of subduing by might, right, and authority—voluntarily casting aside all pretext of charming, delighting, persuading the ear; and thus certain catch-words have got mixed up in the chorus of praise that established his reputation, which, like other serviceable fragments of the wisdom or folly of our ancestors, exercise a traditional influence over us even unto this day.

But in the case of Gluck, we are called upon to mark those important concessions, not to say inconsistencies, into which every artist must be tempted or compelled, let his system be ever so stringent, ever so nicely arranged, when it is an afterthought brought forward as a piece of special pleading, to recommend or to defend his own idiosyncrasy. He was not prevented by his fixed principles from borrowing musical themes from one opera to enrich another

withal, thus throwing discredit on his theory, which he announced was based on the precise and appreciable significance of certain sounds. He was not able to protect himself in the grandest of his grand operas, from introducing the conventionalisms of easy and popular melodies, though these were given to the *ballet*, and not to the dramatic part of the work: forgetting that the *ballet*, as it existed in Gluck's time, was a convention and an excrescence, as much (one might have thought) to be avoided by him as a *da capo* or a trill for the *prima donna*.

The reputation of Gluck, again, has become a tradition rather than a reality, because of the rare execution of his operas; though the execution has been rendered rare by no fault save their own exceeding height and grandeur. And who misjudges "Macbeth" because the present generation have not seen Mrs. Siddons—the last *Lady*? Who depreciates "Lear," because the principal part in that tragedy is almost above the grasp of the most consummate mortal actor conceivable? The heroes and heroines of Gluck's operas are not intellectually placed on heights quite so inaccessible: but, musically, the works are more

difficult of approach. The finest, purest, plainest singing in the grand style, together with the loftiest and most impassioned tragic acting, are not to be found in every-day combination. The screaming ladies, and bellowing gentlemen (I doubt not, graceful and dignified actors), who satisfied French ears, at the period when the master wrote, could now be hardly tolerated, I suspect—even in Germany, where the appreciation of vocal art has been so slow, so uncertain, and, of late, has shown itself so ready to decline in favour of other preferences. The world requires beauty and variety of tone, as well as power of lungs—some elasticity in the voice, as well as some precision in delivering the words—a company, in short, of great dramatic vocalists of genius—to draw from this music of Gluck its whole meaning. Where or when has such a phenomenon been seen? Once in fifty years Nature and Art produce a Pasta; fifteen years later, comes a Duprez; and when he is ready to retire, a Lind and a Viardot present themselves at opposite ends of the scale, and at opposite corners of the operatic world. Yet the best of the best, grouped together, and directed by some consummate

master spirit, fully imbued with the music and the drama to be performed, would not be too good, collectively, to render adequate justice to these master-pieces of dramatic poetry in music.

But, leaving such Utopian visions of what a represented opera by Gluck should be, there is enough in his music, when reverently sung and played by the inferior singers and coarse operatic actors of modern Germany, to surprise by its beauty, as well as to arrest by its power. What a voluptuous lusciousness of melody floats and dies through the fairy scenes of "Armida!" There is no instance of fascination in music more exquisite than the great tenor song of *Rinaldo** "Plus j'observe ces lieux;" no melody more alluring in its mellow monotony than *Lucinda's solo* (in the same opera), "Jamais, dans ces

* The hunters of plagiarisms are fond of this magnificent *scena*, because they can prove that Gluck improved an idea indicated by Lulli. The scientific pedants rejoice no less cordially in its existence, because of the consecutive fifths, which it delights their hearts to be able to point out. But the former do not recollect how Mozart was indebted to Gluck's "Alceste" for his supernatural music in "Don Juan;" and the latter must stop short at Haydn among the German composers, if they will not allow instances of crudity, licence, and obscurity, to pass without an anathema.

beaux lieux." Then how delicately fantastic is the bird chorus, "C'est l'amour qui retient dans ses chaines" — as noble the while, in its style, as Handel's "Cheer her, O Baal," in "Athaliah," or, "May no rash intruder," in "Solomon." In "Alceste," the beauty is more irresistible than the intense tragic tenderness of the music. I have never been more moved by delicious sensations and deep emotions conjointly, so strongly as by a very moderate performance of this opera at Berlin. Every amateur knows the sublime pantomimic music in the temple scene; but when it is aided by stage representation, its dignity acquires a tenderness which becomes almost oppressively powerful. Never was air simpler—never was harmony less recondite; but the pulses stop as the religious march goes on, in eagerness that the listener may lose no single note, pause, or chord, in a strain of such rare inspiration. Then, how delicious is the air of *Admetus*, immediately after the chorus with *ballet* in the second act, with its caressing burden: an every-day passage now, but when it was originated, how honeyed, how fresh, how tender, how new! Music has few examples of sweetness without sickliness more perfect than this.

Or, changing the drama, shall we turn to the *cantilena* of *Orpheus* addressed to the *Furies?* There, if beauty and seduction had not been in the musician's power, the scene must have failed, and that fatally, owing to the incompleteness of the spell. But who has ever felt for an instant that the composer was unequal to the scene—or that Music, in itsmost suave, and winning, and subduing forms, was not there represented and justified as stronger than the most strongly pourtrayed rage and resolve on the part of the demons, fiercely determined to maintain their grasp on *Eurydice*, in proportion as they know their prey to be fair and precious. Those who talk of Gluck's grandeur, should recollect that this is possibly the strongest example of the might of beauty vindicated existing in art. There is no painted apotheosis of painting; no sculptural illustration of the power of sculpture; no poetical hymn to poetry even (I will dare to assert), so symmetrically complete, so potentially captivating as this.—One more example of Gluck's beauty may be cited: in the heroine's grand *aria* in his "Iphigenia in Tauride," "O malheureuse Iphigenie!" the lament of a mighty princess, daughter of a great king, sister of a

hero, with whom the Fates and the Gods have not disdained to strive, was removed (it might have been thought) by its argument, and the height of her who delivered it, above the sphere of superficial attraction. But Gluck knew better than to sacrifice so cardinal, so *vital* an element of his poetry and its power as beauty, at such an important moment: accordingly this air, the loftiest perhaps of all his single songs, is perhaps, among them all, the most symmetrically lovely, whether as regards its *cantilena*, its accompaniment, or the unisonal introduction of the chorus at its close.

In none of the cited instances is there the slightest attempt—born of weakness, and bred by conceit—to force art beyond its own special bounds. None of these specimens is antipathetic to the voice, or repulsive to the singer; or conciliatory of those strange souls who hold that sincerity and brutality, might and ugliness, are one. The forms of the Etruscan vase—"the line," as painters put it, of the *Apollo*, *Venus*, *Niobe*—the proportions of the portico of the Parthenon—are not more essentially, palpably, intelligently graceful, complete, and harmonious, than are

these examples in music. Yet those who would praise, and who endeavour while praising also to prove, the beauty of Gluck, are as yet without a public.

In like manner I have never heard one of Gluck's operas, without being surprised by a merit in them, for which the annalists (before the time of M. Berlioz, at least) have never given him credit,—namely, orchestral variety, interest, and invention. Though Mozart's scores be more satisfying to the eye, there is in Gluck's instrumentation something that arrests the ear beyond anything existing in the "Idomeneo," or the "Clemenza,"—a force, brightness, and originality, which are as new as they are delicious. I know not why it should be so, but certain it is that his fancies, as fancies, come out into brighter relief than any thing in Mozart's operas—*Tamino's* flute, *Papageno's* bells, and the *tromboni* that speak together with *Il Commendatore*, perhaps, excepted. Let me cite as a few among many instances, the dialogue betwixt the two wind instruments to the words—

"J' entends retentir dans mon sein,
Le cri plaintif de la nature,"

in "Iphigenie en Aulide;"—the ferocious life

given to the chorus of Scythians in "Iphigenie en Tauride," by the use of the cymbal;—the lute-like *pizzicato* of the violins in the chorus with *ballet* in the second act of "Alceste," and then the entire change of instruments on the *amoroso* in G minor, which serves as *trio* (so to say) to this composition.—In the final *trio*, again, of the same opera, as well as the sunny, simple expression of the fullest, most rapturous happiness which that movement displays—do I remember an effect made by a prolonged shake on the flutes—as charming as some breath of flower-scents in spring which is so fresh and welcome, that we cannot but choose to remember it, though it have passed us at one of those moments when we are most absorbed by some powerful emotion. Perhaps these happy traits and touches tell all the more, from the comparative simplicity of the tissue into which they are interwoven—and supposing this proved to be the case, we may arrive at some canons of dramatic orchestral effect, not easy to reconcile with the practice of those writers who have treated Opera symphonically. Perhaps, however, their entire significance arises from the perfect balance of mind which seems to have distin-

guished Gluck, and which apparently enabled him thoroughly to accomplish, with the noblest use of legitimate means, every purpose that he set before him.

The task in hand is not a monograph on the genius of Gluck, so much as the presentation of a few thoughts on certain points in his genius which may have been too generally overlooked. Thus, it is not needful to dwell upon his supremacy among operatic writers, in the declamatory portions of his works. His recitative stands alone: approached by Mozart only, in some few passages—such, for instance, as *Donna Anna's* burst in "Don Juan," when she recognises her father's murderer; emulated by Rossini, in his third act of "Otello;" but by himself always maintained at the highest point of interest, without ever becoming overwrought or oppressive. By this very characteristic, those who have searched the depths of musical invention, would have been led to admit the claims of Gluck as a melodist:—seeing that no good recitative will be ever written by those who are ignorant of the balance of cadence —of the sweetness or sadness of certain intervals —of contrast betwixt phrase and phrase—of mea-

sured time, least licentious when freest—of all, in short, that goes to make one of the tunes in which the world is to delight.

The harsh, sensible prose of a Swift is not further from the blank verse of a Milton, than much of the recitative written by the so-called intellectual school of anti-melodists, is distant from the soliloquies or dialogues of Gluck. They are in music, what the monologues of *Hamlet*, the discourse of *Romeo* and *Juliet* at the balcony, the oration of *Antony* over *Cæsar's* body, are in poetry:—the freest, most natural, most exciting utterances of emotion in Art that can be found or framed; so true, that they seem to have formed part of our own daily life and experience; yet *how* high as creations when they are measured against the best which the best of men less distinguished have produced! The thought, the experience, the suffering, that must have gone to make these scenes, to choose these notes, do not come home to the young student in music. He likes something more of parade—something more of the appearance of difficulty overcome—and fancies these connecting links unimportant and easy to fashion.—(I am not speaking here of the newest writers of Germany,

who would reduce Opera to a composition of these links only; since they "came in" after the Revolution of 1848.)—He is caught by imitations and strange chords. He is devout in praise of "the flat ninth." As he advances, however, the more catholic he becomes towards the modern school of those who can only produce effect by accumulation, the more seriously will he be impressed by writers of an elder dispensation, who awe, impress, and enchant us by the simplicity of their eternal greatness—the more intimately will he relish the choral force of Handel, and the intense dramatic vigour of Gluck.

A singular fate has attended Gluck's five great operas. Popular they can hardly have ever been said to be, save during the time when all Paris was raging one way or the other—as Paris loved and loves to rage—on their account; but neither can they be said to have been ever wholly off the stage. There have been fits of classicism, and fits of romanticism, and fits of fate-dramas, and fits of Shakspeare mania, and of Molière mania, and fits (pretty long and intoxicating ones) of preference for Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti—nay, for such "small deer"

as Adam, Balfe, and Flotow; but almost every German opera-house of any note has been obliged to keep one of Gluck's operas in its repertory—his "Orpheus" being the most seldom selected—so that certain traditions connected with their performance have never wholly died out, nor passed into the neglect of the stage lumber-room. They will bear any conceivable amount of stage splendour in their preparation. They *demand* extraordinary respect; no operas existing, of which a slack or slighting performance would be so intolerable. From first to last, every creature concerned in their execution must be *en scene:* not merely thoroughly aware of his special duties, but penetrated by the tone of the story. Here, I suspect, even more than in the sublimity of their principal parts, lies the stumbling-block in the way of managers. They have no trio of masks, no "Market Chorus," no "Di tanti," no "Benediction des poignards,"—for the sake of which well executed, the public will overlook a tame or slovenly handling of less salient portions of the opera. At Berlin, it is the general propriety of representation in which the lover of Gluck must find his pleasure, and not,

I fear, in the singing of his *Iphigenias* and *Pylades*.—At Berlin, too, there seems a tradition to be proud of performing these operas; and the public accordingly, when one is performed, appears in solemn array, with the well-pleased air of persons who go to church, for the sake of the institution and the example. Thus these noble works may possibly be kept alive—kept within the reach of dramatic singers of the highest class, who may be large, deep, and skilful enough to recognise what scope the music gives, and to what heights its interpreters may be raised. Meanwhile, the exhibition of them forms a feature in the music of Berlin, which atones for the want of many another feature, and which merits special gratitude from all who admire the works of the greatest masters in Art.

CHAPTER VI.

THE THEATRE AT BERLIN FROM 1840 TO 1848.

Patronage of music under the present King of Prussia—Commission to Herr Meyerbeer—"The Camp of Silesia"—The Music to "Struensee," by the same composer—The commissions to Mendelssohn — The old absolutism of royal patronage revived.

To examine what the present King of Prussia, whose reign was inaugurated in 1840, has substantially effected for music in Germany, is a subject for some future historian of German Art, rather than for a work for this.—Nevertheless, it is impossible to avoid observing that, during the first eight years of his sovereignty, his Majesty approved himself as the successor of the great Frederick, not merely by his earnest protection and patronage of music, but also by the forms into which his interest moulded itself, and sought

to mould the spirits of those whom he gathered to his capital.

During the years which elapsed betwixt the "Huldigung" and the Revolution of 1848, strenuous attempts were made by the King of Prussia to raise Music in connection with Art and letters, to a high place in his metropolis. Whether greater union, greater placability, greater scope for German theatrical composers, a better construction put by musician upon musician, have distinguished the artistic circles of Berlin since the Chevalier Spontini, a stranger, was succeeded by Herr Meyerbeer, a native of the town, is a delicate matter for future, not for contemporary investigation. The one new opera originated at Berlin, within the eight years in question, that has excited the slightest sensation, is Herr Meyerbeer's "Camp of Silesia;" and this rather because of the renown of its composer, and because certain pieces were introduced into it for the exhibition of Mademoiselle Jenny Lind's amazing vocal powers, than for any permanent value in music or story, entitling the work to rank with "Les Huguenots" and "Le Prophete."

The "Camp," as it is well known, was written

as a *piece d'occasion:* and those employed in its concoction seemed unable to fancy anything less direct and prosaic, by way of subject, than Frederick the Great with his flute, and one of those monstrous military gatherings, the nature (if not the uniform) of which is as familiar to every Prussian boy and girl as the opening of their eyes in the morning. The poorness and platitude of Herr Rellstab's *libretto*, and the want of any of those moments of intense emotion in which M. Meyerbeer delights, seem to have damped the composer. Slight and pretty he is, at best, but has made nothing that will last. There are plenty of tunes in the opera—camp tunes, gipsy tunes—but these are smart rather than new, and when measured against like *motivi* in a work by no means classical, Donizetti's "La Fille du Régiment," they sound poor and common. The *terzetto* for *Vielka* and two flutes, one on the stage, and one behind the scenes, is better as a concert-piece than when heard in the opera; because there, the songstress must remain at such a distance from both instruments (the flutist on the stage, like *Tamino*, in "Zauberflöte," being merely a mime), that all the intimacy of response and dialogue is

lost, and the effect is that of a *soprano* scrambling against a double echo.—There is, however, another *terzetto* (also in the third act) which is charming—full of phrases as happy as some of those which give solidity and savour to the otherwise frivolous *trio bouffe* in "Le Prophète"—flowing, rich, and melodious;—and the final national hymn, which was prophesied in the overture, is an animated, enthusiastic air, of most inspiriting quality. But the effect of the whole work is that of meagreness of idea, and extravagant, unmusical pomp of *spectacle*, forced into an odd union;—and in all cases where the stage will not admit of the marshalling of several regiments, or where the heroine has not the peculiar voice and the peculiar ways with her that Mademoiselle Jenny Lind had, or where there is no Prussian public half sentimentally, half cynically "to sit upon" the flute-playing of their great King—the glory, I think, of "The Camp" would dwindle into nothingness;—so that Herr Meyerbeer may be wise in following M. Spontini's example with respect to his opera written for Berlin, and in showing no alacrity to provide it with a passport.

But, though the one new German opera pro-

duced at the Berlin Opera House, betwixt the days of the "Huldigung" and the time present, can hardly expect or pretend to count as addition to the repertory of the German theatre; something interesting has still been produced in the Prussian capital. This has taken the form of mixed theatrical entertainment. At the King of Prussia's instance, Herr Meyerbeer produced music to his brother's tragedy of "Struensee." A greater Prussian composer, too, also summoned to his native town by the present King, wrote for Berlin his music to "Antigone," "Œdipus,"—to the "Athalie" of Racine, and to the "Midsummer Night's Dream" of Shakspeare.

Mendelssohn was not wholly a stranger to the stage of the Prussian capital. To the production there and withdrawal thence of one of his early operas, "Camacho's Wedding," he never referred willingly. Both the work and its composer were, probably, heartlessly treated in his own town. But though posterity may, some day, fall back on the opera with that toleration bred among its writer's later successes, which will invest every line from his pen with a certain charm, —no one can pretend that the opera *per se*, deserved to please or to live. It is among the few published

compositions by its writer to which the epithet "crude" may be applied. The pedantry in it oppresses the fancy. There is a taste of Berlin pretension in the music, which may be the reason why the prophet did not find honour at home.

Be it good or bad, however, the fate of "Camacho's Wedding" contributed to keep Mendelssohn aloof from the stage. By the four theatrical works which he produced (as has been just said) "on command," as much as by the fragment of "Loreley," which was his swan song, we may divine the extent of our loss in his silence.—Who will not regret that in place of the court commissions in question, Mendelssohn's royal patron did not order a simple, honest, entire opera? The circumstance of his having to write for the delectation of princes, courtiers, professors, and men of letters, in no respect exempted the composer from the annoyances and postponements which seem inevitably to belong to the production of theatrical music. He had to fight with pedantic fopperies, or inane criticisms, in the production of his music to Shakspeare's fairy play; and with caprices no less teasing in the delayed execution of his "Athalie" music. "Antigone" seemed

to come out under a brighter star; and he always referred to its first performance as to one of the good days of which his life (God be thanked!) had so many. But under the best of circumstances, these works are, by their nature, rarely accessible, appealing only to a peculiar and limited public,—liable, when produced, to misconstruction and failure of effect, in no respect ascribable to their musical qualities; and thus they can hardly be esteemed as important gifts to the musical stage of Germany.

It may be feared that the present monarch of Prussia, so far as concerns music, is merely a king of the old absolute pattern,—indulging his own æsthetic vagaries, though with a smoother, more modern, more *protesting* theory of patriotism than kings of the elder time troubled themselves to entertain or to express. The most elaborate deliberations of all the professors of all the universities assembled in conclave will never really reproduce the theatre and the music of the Greeks. Who would call up the ghost of any great poet, were the condition that he must be heard speaking modern language? Yet, on the other side, who would bear the work of art, seen under all the rude cir-

cumstances and absurd accidents of its original production? Great was the stir made among the Shakspearians of Berlin, with Tieck at their head, to have "The Midsummer Night's Dream" played exactly as it was in the time of Shakspeare. Alas! for the connoisseurship of Germany. The impossibility of this forced itself on the most devout — point by point. They were compelled to submit to the introduction of scenery painted by Herr Gropius and others, in place of the antique arrangement of curtains and signboards. It was true that the Athenian lovers might still be presented (according to the old tradition) "in Spanish habits"— and this classicality was actually proposed, and the proposal had to be energetically combated by Mendelssohn. Whether it was ultimately carried out or not, is of small consequence to the argument.

It is difficult to think of such parleys and ransackings—of such lame efforts—of such provisional expedients, barren in origin, and null in result, with patience—when we reflect what the same patronage genially bestowed, might have effected. Some royal wish of seeing a German story set by a German composer, might have

persuaded Mendelssohn to abridge the time of hesitation which he had allowed to elapse before he attempted opera-composition as a man, and might have recorded the present King of Prussia's reign in the history of Art, by some great, enduring, and universal work, which should have been to the theatre what "Elijah" is to the sacred concert room.

GLIMPSES AT DRESDEN

IN 1839-40,

WITH MATTER CONCERNING A LATER PERIOD.

GLIMPSES AT DRESDEN

IN 1839-40.

CHAPTER I.

THE OPERA AND ITS ENVIRONS—1839.

Railroad travelling in Germany—A national propensity—The spirit of Dresden—A Quatuorzain written on the Bruhl Terrace—The sights and curiosities of the place—The music I heard at Dresden—A country walk—The opera-house—The "Euryanthe" of Weber—Its cast—Madame Schröder Devrient—Herr Tichatschek—The orchestra—The ugly chorus—Sketch of "Euryanthe"—The absurdity of its *Libretto*—Madame von Chèzy—"Cymbeline" destroyed—The chivalresque spirit of its music—The opening chorus—The part of *Adolar*—The part of *Euryanthe*; its brilliancy—Her *Bravura* in the third act, and its Shaksperian close—Strong effect produced by the music—"Der Mai"—The environs of Dresden—Schiller's closet—Weber's country house—Pillnitz—A court custom of Saxony—Royal amateurship (with a note from Dr. Burney)—Strange forms of royal patronage.

THIRTEEN years ago, the railroad travelling of Germany had features which were all its own.

In England, the tendency, from the first, was to whirl "the human parcel" from place to place along with an irresistible rapidity entirely precluding the possibility of thought, or conversation, or enjoyment; and to make of the journey a disagreeable, bewildering dream, compounded of several blasts of the shrill steam-whistle—a few tunnels—a few broken clamours, timid or troublesome, of passengers on their entrance and exit —perhaps a few broken limbs—the best part of which is its close. In Belgium more time for observation has been allowed: and rich farms, stately belfries embroidered with tracery and ornament, are to be seen as you are swept—more leisurely than at home—from one town to another. But there was in Belgium, at the period under notice, an uncertainty which kept the mind anxious. So many lines meet and diverge at Mechlin, and so awkwardly was the transmission of baggage managed in 1839-40, that it was seven chances to one but, while the pilgrim was upon his road to the Rubenses at Antwerp, his "mails" might be scouring along the rails to Liege. Hood's story of the bewildered lady, strong in her own foresight, who spent the day in travelling backwards and forwards betwixt

Ghent and Ostend, owing to the want of her proper understanding, and her own prudence "in never getting out," is hardly a caricature.* But betwixt Leipsic and Dresden was to be seen, in 1839-40, a national propensity in its ripest development;—I mean the disposition of the best-hearted hosts, and soundest instrumentalists

* Years after the above was written, I travelled one evening along the Baden line of railway with an excellent German—a University Professor to boot—who made Hood's whimsy whimsically real. We were both bound, it appeared, from Carlsruhe to Frankfort; and I was preparing to stop and to sleep at Heidelberg, where the Frankfort line comes in, with the intention of pursuing my journey by the first opportunity the following morning. The dear Professor was also desirous of arriving as early as possible at Frankfort; but he would go on to Mannheim to sleep (giving himself thereby some additional miles of distance), to return on the morrow to Heidelberg, from which he too would diverge.—I fancied he had friends at Mannheim. But no! "He was convinced," he said, "that all railway accidents arose from passengers hastily getting out; and he had made it his resolution never to stop at intermediate stations, but always to go to the far end." Much reference to the map was required to convince this careful traveller that he would be compelled to break his vow next morning, by leaving the railway at Heidelberg, when he arrived from Mannheim! At last, however, the fact was clearly demonstrated; and the matter ended in my fellow-traveller profiting by my wondrous experience and sagacity, and, like myself, passing the night at Heidelberg.—Twenty years hence, such an anecdote will read like a paragraph from the chronicles of *Gotham!*—1853.

of Europe, to stop on every possible occasion—"*etwas zu essen.*"

I cannot describe how whimsically this wonderful appetite struck me on my journeys to Dresden in 1839. The train I used started from Leipsic an hour after the early dinner; when the copious repast might surely, one would have thought, have sufficed for a part, at least, of the afternoon. No such thing. At every one of the six or eight stations between the two towns—fruit, cakes, cups of broth, glasses of brandy, squares of sodden pastry with plums imbedded therein, biscuits, sandwiches, plums, pears, and other garden *et cetera*, were proffered to the caravan, from baskets of hawkers, and in the station-houses. Nor were they proffered in vain: old and young, women and men—already provided, in nine cases out of ten, with a travelling provision against famine—partook of them with a zeal and an intrepidity which, every time I witnessed it, recalled to me *Petruchio's* disdainful exclamation—

"Nothing but sit and sit, and eat and eat!"

Comfortable in beguiling the way as were these interludes, such are not precisely the best imaginable preparations for Dresden. The Saxon

capital, both on first sight and on a subsequent visit, has impressed me with a peculiar feeling of its elegance which is not to be described without the entertainer of it being considered Della Cruscan and fantastic—at least not in work-a-day prose.

ON THE BRUHL TERRACE,

OCTOBER, 1840.

THERE hangs a tranquil and peculiar spell
O'er dome, and ample bridge, and rapid stream,
And dim fantastic palace, where the gleam
Of ghostly shapes, methinks, would glimmer well
At dead midnight. Autumn should ever dwell,
Rich, fading town, with thee! Here I could dream
Whole days away o'er some sweet solemn theme
Of mystic Fancy, careless how the bell
Of noisy life importunately tolled
Its children to their tasks. Ay, and such hours,
By some esteemed more worthless than the flowers
Which drop in silence ere their bells unfold,
Show not our heaviest debt for wasted powers,
On Truth's eternal chronicle enrolled!

Even the excitements of the far-famed gallery, with its *Madonna del Sisto*, its Reading Magdalen, and its *Christo della Moneta*,—where I lingered for two hours every morning, till eye and mind could receive no more,—could not neutralize the agreeable and soothing impression which the stately Saxon city produced on my mind. Of

the ways of its people I know nothing beyond the universal report, which apportions to it a cheerful and cultivated society of refined intelligences. But I have never stayed in a town in which the idea of complete insulation brought with it so little of dreariness—where so many thoughts, and feelings, and fancies, seemed to rise up as companions. I can picture to myself no better residence for any one occupied in the absorbing task of imaginative creation; and, to push speculation one point further, I never passed the door of the house of Herr Tieck, who then lived in the Altmarkt, without feeling as if a certain harmony existed between his fantastic and spiritual tales, and the city of his adoption. This perhaps may be fond trifling; but the musical pleasures of Dresden, in 1839-40, were solid and real—marked with "a white stone" in the calendar of my experiences.—There, on my visit in 1839, I first made acquaintance with the "Euryanthe" of Weber.

The practicability of quickening musical appetite by a legitimate country walk, taken ten minutes before entering a theatre, was a pleasant variety in my play-going experiences. Suffering under no ordinary impatience to hear

a work I had so long ardently desired to hear —and my appetite piqued by the perpetual operatic disappointments I had been undergoing during my German progress,—I might have foreseen what the chimes told me just as I was leaving the beautiful Elbe-bridge for the space in front of the barn-like theatre,* namely, that I was three quarters of an hour too soon. Away, then, I strolled down through the Zwinger-gardens, along a solemn avenue of chestnut-trees, at the end of which stands a large orangery, and, turning through a court-yard, was directly in a *bona fide* meadow, stretching down to the placid Elbe, garnished with pollard trees, such as Paul Potter loved to paint, among which Paul Potter's comely cows were slowly going home to be milked; and divided by a brook—positively a brook, with stepping-stones. Perhaps sunset never made a lovelier picture of Dresden than on that evening. There was hardly an air to stir the leaves; smoke there was none to curl; and the sky, glowing with all the hues of gold, and crimson, and violet, made a festal pageant of the domes and spires

* Since my visit to Dresden in 1840, the new and magnificent theatre has been opened.

rising beyond the Elbe-bridge. The beauty of the weather, and the rarity of such a pleasure by way of prelude to an act of play-going, tempted me to loiter to the last possible moment. Yet, after finding myself comfortably installed in my *sperr-sitz*, I had still time to spare before the overture commenced,—time to say to myself, "Well, after all, poor Weber was perhaps better here than at Berlin!" I had been looking at the bright side of his Dresden residence,—the winning and picturesque beauty of its environs.

The cast which the peculiarly tidily-printed playbill revealed to me was strong. Madame Schröder Devrient played the part of *Euryanthe*, and Herr Tichatschek that of the hero *Adolar*. She was still acting with all the power and pathos that had earned for her in England the title of the "Queen of tears," and singing the terribly difficult music of the part with a force and freshness I found it totally impossible to account for, save on the hypothesis that some miracle had created her voice anew since she was last in London. For a moment it did not occur to me that the cause of Madame Schröder Devrient's apparently renovated clear-

ness and purity might lie in the flat diapason of the orchestra. It was so, however; the Dresden band being nearly half a tone lower than any I have ever heard. But this flatness threw over the whole performance of a powerful and brilliant orchestra, most carefully directed by Herr Reissiger, a languor which—knowing as I did the music well, and missing none of its points—puzzled me very nearly as much as the restored juvenility of the *prima donna*.

Among the tenors of Germany, Herr Tichatschek still bears a high reputation; and few, in any country, have ever crossed the stage with an ampler proportion of natural advantages. He is of the right height—handsome—his voice in 1839 was strong, sweet, and extensive, taking the *altissimo* notes of its register in chest tones. Then, too, he possessed a youthful energy of manner calculated to gain the favour of all who hear and see him. I have heard no one in Germany who was better qualified to sustain the glorious music belonging to the part of *Adolar*.

The Dresden chorus I found clear, forcible, and paying the utmost German attention to light and shade—far more satisfactory, in short,

than the chorus of Berlin. Some of the *soprani*, however, had an intolerably metallic harshness of tone in the upper notes of their voices, which set my teeth on edge, and made me shiver whenever I felt a *sforzando* coming on. The defect was forced upon notice most especially in Weber's opera; but I recognised it again, in 1840, in the slighter and more moderately composed music of "Masaniello." I think, too, that not even among our opera *figurantes* before Easter did I ever see such a regiment of ill-favoured women. One is never so struck by the obtrusiveness of ugliness on the French stage. Intrinsically frightful enough, as the Graces know, are some not merely of the back-ground figures, but of the principal personages who figure on the theatrical arenas of Paris; but, from Dejazet downwards, they contrive to turn awkwardness into grace, irregularity into piquancy, and Age itself "into favour and prettiness,"—by what spell, must remain a mystery which no familiarity can ever unravel to an English or a German inquirer.

But enough of these trifles and executive details, which, as the opera proceeded, broke upon me one by one in spite of the fascination

exercised over me by its music.—"Euryanthe" is too little known in England as yet. Some day it may become more familiar here, as one of the most remarkable expressions of passion in Music which the lyric drama possesses. Nothing short of some such excellence could have carried off a story so confused and incomprehensible as was furnished to poor Weber by way of text. It is difficult to understand what freak of prudery drove the German adaptors of the exquisite "Cymbeline" of Shakspeare so utterly to transform and distort and weaken its incidents. Why *Lysiart*, the boasting and malevolent *Iachimo* of the opera, should not of himself be sufficient to lie away the honour of its heroine, by way of winning his wager;—why *Eglantine*, the she-fiend associated with him, should bear such a mortal hatred to the heroine,—and how a ring stolen from a dead woman's tomb should be as damning a proof to *Adolar* of *Euryanthe's* infidelity as the original description of "the mole cinque-spotted," and the production of the ring from *Imogen's* own finger to the loyal *Leonatus*—are puzzles which can hardly fail to engage all who ever condescend to seek for reality and coherence

in a *libretto*. The impossibility of their solution, however, well nigh destroyed Weber's *chef-d'œuvre*, by making the work all but unintelligible.

It seems strange, that for the triumphant author of "Der Freischutz," no collaborator could be found more capable and distinguished than Madame von Chèzy. She has been described to me as that most doleful of all beings, an untidy, unhappy, unsuccessful woman of letters—a slatternly *Sappho*, from whom all men shrunk—eager, old, warm-hearted, and (if I mistake not) fat. I have heard an anecdote concerning the first night of "Euryanthe," at Vienna, the rueful pathos of which places it among the everyday tragedies over which nobody weeps, because the ugly and the old are the heroines. Among other incidents of that performance, I have heard of this poor Madame von Chèzy struggling over the benches in the hope of finding a seat to see her own opera,—hustled, mocked, and rudely treated, by the good-natured Viennese for whose pleasure she had been catering.—What a contrast betwixt the reception of the ill-requited, much-abused struggler, who, after all, gave Weber his text, and

the idolatry lavished upon Mademoiselle Sontag, the first *Euryanthe*, who only executed what was set down for her!—But, in spite of this twinge, when one thinks of the mortification of the battered old authoress, who can avoid wishing that some competent hand had set her opera book to rights? Even now, I cannot but fancy that something might still be done to relieve the incident on which the plot is made to turn, of its insipid absurdity, and, by clearing matters up, to give the drama a chance of a better position on the stage than, in its present form, it can ever hold.

Were I called upon to name the modern German opera which has, musically, the most excited me, I should cite "Euryanthe," at Dresden. So strong, indeed, was the excitement in the theatre, as to render me unconscious of the many crudities contained in the score. I felt carried away, not so much by a fervour as by a fever of music. One knows the composition to be in many places strained, in many more, patchy. The airs are constructed on unusual and arbitrary forms of rhythm; there is no prophesying, by the best-practised listener, of the change or chord which

is next to come. But these faults are felt in closet study far more than in stage intercourse: while, to compensate for them, we have character, colour, melody, and the boldest rendering of the strongest emotions — tenderness, wonder, pity, passion, terror, and ecstasy.

To instance a little,—let me call attention to the treatment of the chorus in the first scene, by way of illustrating Weber's mastery over character and colour. No higher and more chivalrous strain exists in music than the antiphonic song of knights and ladies which opens the story after the brilliant and stately overture has subsided. There is the joy of high-born youth and beauty in every note of the stanza given to the *soprani;* a touch of tenderness nothing short of Shaksperian in its close—

setting off, in the happiest contrast, the glorious burst of male voices which immediately succeeds. In this, the incidental shade of ruggedness, distinctive of the sex,—

—is hardly less masterly. How charming throughout, too, is the employment of the accompaniment!—which ever and anon resumes its measures, gay and jubilant, but by no means such as could be mistaken for those of peasant gaiety or jubilee—and which, at length, flows broadly forth into a minuet of such a grave and ample grandeur, as to remind us of the "solemn dancing" which formed so important a part of all old court festivities.

More marvellous is the use of the chorus in the *finale* to the second act: beginning with a flowing strain of knightly joy and homage; then—as the false *Iachimo* of the opera contrives, by his base artifices, to blacken the fame of the heroine past the possibility of her explanation or excuse—passing through the gradations of unbelief, inquiry, conviction, contempt, anathema! Recitative is hardly freer from trammels than this series of movements; and when, at last, the knights all turn away from *Euryanthe* as a traitress, the ban of their

indignation falls on the ear and on the heart with as much force in its obstreperous violence as if it were one of those old maledictions which had so terrible a power to crush and to annihilate in the days of Feudalism.

We have here, in a scene of the strongest emotion, perhaps the first, and not the least forcible examples of that recklessly courageous and dramatic use of the opera chorus, which Weber's fellow-pupil, Meyerbeer, has since employed with such consummate skill. It would be curious, had one the means, to trace how far such a step forward made in addition to dramatic resource was natural to the two masters, how far it may be ascribable to the training of their teacher, the eccentric and empirical Abbé Vogler. That he could teach counterpoint thoroughly seems to be denied by everyone, from Mozart downwards; but a coincidence worth looking into, lies in the fact, that his two famous pupils have successively evoked and employed a living spirit in musical drama which will never again be laid.

Again, the chivalresque tone which distinguishes "Euryanthe" is not more eminently displayed in the general treatment of the story

than in the delineation of its principal personages.—We may begin with *Adolar* the hero, who begins the opera, with one of Weber's happiest, most romantic melodies. The romance "*Unter blühn den Mandelbaümen*" is written in the French style of *couplet*—but there is a full-hearted and manly sweetness in the strain of which French composers have given us few examples. The whole hero's part bears the same true knightly stamp. He is, throughout, "brave and tender,"—whether in the scene where he throws down his gage to the asperser of *Euryanthe's* honour, when he repeats the martial subject of the earlier part of the overture—or whether, when, in his song of expectation in the second act, he gives—because he is alone—a broader vent to his manly rapture in that delicious second melody—

which, also, has been wrought into the prelude of the drama, to prepare the hearer for a love-story of engrossing depth and passion.

Very beautiful, again, in another style, though somewhat lacking simplicity, is *Euryanthe's en-*

trata, "*Glöklein im Thale.*" How exquisite is here the orchestral effect caused by the alternation of the stringed and wind instruments, and the happy use of the searching and voluptuous tones of the *violoncello!* Not that the voice is either drowned, or secondary, or uninteresting, as in some of Spohr's songs, where the subtlety of instrumental texture claims admiration. Though the melody for the voice be somewhat forced, it is still kept uppermost in interest. The animation of the air rises as it proceeds; and the heart, at first blanked by pauses and suspenses totally new to it, is, by the close, raised to such full pleasure as I know not how else may be awakened, save by some of the deep, true, tender, and womanly outpourings of affection of Shakspeare's real *Imogen*—such an one, for instance, as the following, which, at the onset, gives us the key to her entire character:—

> "I did not take my leave of him, but had
> Most pretty things to say. Ere I could tell him
> How I would think on him, at certain hours,
> Such thoughts, and such; or I could make him swear
> The shes of Italy should not betray
> Mine interest and his honour; or have charged him
> At the sixth hour of morn, at noon, at midnight,

I am in heaven for him; or ere I could
Give him that parting kiss, which I had set
Betwixt two charming words—comes in my father," &c.

More familiar than *Euryanthe's entrata* is her *bravura*, leading the quartett which closes the first act, and expressing the second change of the character—from tender recollection to delight in the approach of reunion. From this point her part is conducted to its close with a rare vividness and brilliancy. But while it embraces the extremes of rapture and despair, its passion is wondrously varied. For instance, how admirably different is the excitement of the duet in the second act—"*Hin nimm die seele mein*,"* from that of the *allegro* to *Euryanthe's* grand *scena* in the third act! There the delirious intensity of longing, quickened by a gleam of hope, rises to a height of intermingled ecstasy and pain—of panting suspense and anxious anticipation striving for utterance—with a vehe-

* In the main phrase of this—

it would almost seem as if Weber had borrowed his *motivo* from "Il Tancredi" of Rossini. But if the harshest construction

mence which seems as though it must hurry its victim onward to death or madness. As an example of rhythm capriciously broken for the production of the most exciting effects, there exist few specimens so effective as that air; especially when, by the entrance of the supporting chorus, on the return of the theme, its irregularity is brought into a clearer light.* The close of the scene, too, when the singer sinks exhausted by her emotion, and when the voices of the rough hunters, who bear her away

is to be put upon coincidence, the plagiarism is amply atoned for by the grace, variety, and intense expression of the second part;—how different from the mechanical braying of trumpets and beating of drums with which Italian composers, in their idleness or their incompetence, never fail to fill up the blank between the first enunciation of a theme and its repetition!

* Not to interrupt the flow of fantastic speculation, or to become unnecessarily tedious, I will spare the reader the passage in which I noted, after the lights, the shadows of "Euryanthe;" I mean the black and villanous characters of *Eglantine* and *Lysiart*. The latter is, musically, as splendid a creation as the hero and heroine. His duet with *Eglantine*, at the opening of the second act, and all his morsels of *solo* in the grand concerted pieces, rise to the highest point in the expression of evil passion and duplicity. His comrade in guilt is less intelligible, in spite of the care with which Weber has *labelled* her with a peculiarly significant and serpentine phrase. She is a mere *walking* Fury, and, thus, as superfluous to the interest which the story excites, as is the walking Lover or the walking Father of a sentimental comedy.

on a litter of boughs and leaves, die away into a grave and melancholy silence, is in the highest strain of picturesque invention. O, had Weber but been entrusted with such a situation and such poetry as occur in the original play, where the rudely-nurtured princes, bending over the dead body of *Fidele*,

> . . . . the bird
> Whom they had made so much of,

pour out their sorrow in the most deeply mournful and artlessly manly of all dirges,—delicate as the air, but rurally homely as the cavern and the trees to whose echoes it was sung,—what music might he not have written! To Beethoven might have belonged the *Lear*, and the *Othello*, and the *Macbeth* of Shakspeare; but to Weber, such dramas of romantic fantasy as the "Winter's Tale," "Cymbeline," and "The Tempest." He was, what Hogg delighted to call himself, "the king of the mountain and faëry school."—His is music instinct with the spirit of that olden time, when there were omens whispered in the woods, and battles foretold by the blood-red phantoms that brandished their arms and waved their banners in the

West. The fancy of it is not untinctured with superstition; the hue upon it is either the pearly light of Dream-land, or that gorgeous tint which streams through some blazoned window garnished "with many a quaint device!" Not only have his airs and melodies a *costume*—in their merriment there is an echo of the elemental world, as well as in their sadness an appeal to Man's inner heart. Every thing in Nature that is wildest and blithest—the laughing of brooks as they leap from stone to stone, the glancing of early sunshine over the ocean when its waters are curled by the blithest of autumn breezes, the ecstasy of birds in the full enjoyment of life and summer—has a part and a reflection in Weber's livelier music.

Child of Romance! how varied was thy skill!—
  Now, stealing forth in airy melody,
  Such as the west wind breathes along the sky,
When golden evening lingers on the hill;
Now, with some fierce and startling chord didst chill
The blood to ice, and bathe with dew the brow;
  Anon, thou didst break forth in brilliant flow
Of wild rejoicing, such as well might fill
  The bright sea-chambers where the mermaids play:
All elemental sounds thou didst control;

The roar of rocking boughs,—the flash of spray,—
The earthquake's muttered threat,—the thunder's roll,—
Scattering, like toys, their changes through thy lays,
Till wonder could no more, and rapture silenced praise. *

Such are some of the thousand associations and fantasies that, long hoarded, received full justification as I sat that night listening to "Euryanthe."—As I bent my way home, when the curtain had fallen, and all was still and dark, they bore me company across the long Elbe-bridge. They mixed themselves up that night in my dreams:—no bad preparation for a two days' ramble into Saxon Switzerland and the Elbe valley;—and I got into a little carriage I had hired for the excursion, at six o'clock on the following morning, to the tune of—

Indeed, the sunshine was so glorious and the air so exquisitely balmy, that, but for the yellow leaves, I could easily have cheated myself into fancying that the flower-month was come again.

* "Garland of Musicians."

The environs of Dresden are beautiful: the suburban houses show more marks of a refined taste in floriculture than I have elsewhere seen in Germany. The road rises gently; and the city, seen as I then beheld it,—with the mist of early day wreathing the beehive-like dome of Our Lady's Church and the spires round it, and the Elbe below and behind the bridge lying under a mantle of deep empurpled shadow,—makes as fair a town-picture as one of those splendid clusters of Italian architecture which Gaspar Poussin loved to build in his landscapes. Advancing further, the banks of the Elbe are striped and dotted with vineyards, among which the rough road winds; almost every half mile curving so as to pass through or escape some of the clean red-roofed *witz*-es (*witz* being as favourite a termination to the names of villages near Dresden as *rode* is in the Harz) which, half composed of garden-houses, half of cottages, are as tempting nooks as poet or musician could retreat to for summer residence. Tottering over the road, like the last tower of a broken-down fortress, and clinging to the wall which keeps the soil up to the roots of the vines, a tiny closet is shown, where Schiller

wrote his "Don Carlos." Another little mansion—but a modest one even for a house in a German *weinberg*—saw the birth of Weber's "Oberon." This last is about half-way betwixt the beautiful city and that wild and elvish district, where gigantic rocks, of every menacing and capricious form, strangely overlean the Elbe, and seem to tell of some such miracle performed in the days of "the good people" as was wrought by him who

. . . . "cleft Eildon hills in three."

I gazed wistfully at the cabinets where the poet and musician had carried on their alchemy; but more, I confess, to possess myself of a distinct impression of their aspect, than with that intense enthusiasm which some enjoy on all due occasions:—happy in having feelings like chimes, which cannot fail to answer to the touch, whatever be the mood of the moment, or whose-ever hand it be that puts down the key.—Yet it was impossible, even for my slow self, not to be alive to the influences which such a picturesquely-placed habitation might have exercised over one whom I have always fancied to have been largely acted upon by the sights and

sounds of Nature.—In another point of view, however, on regarding them from a distance, the environs of Dresden seem to me less friendly to the genius of Weber. Not far from this summer residence of his is Pillnitz—the country palace of the Kings of Saxony. I only looked towards it that morning as towards a building of the heaviest possible architecture; the work of some German Vanbrugh. Had I known as much as I have since done, it might not have been the least suggestive station of my Elbe pilgrimage in 1839.

In that dull and grand-looking mansion was preserved, in the composer's time, and, for aught I know, exists to this day, a rag of feudalism, to speak metaphorically,—one of the old condescensions of Royalty, by which the earthenware was allowed to approach the porcelain of society, and Cloth of Frieze to become acquainted with the splendours of Cloth of Gold. The rulers of Saxony dined in public, and dined at two o'clock. More than one friend has graphically described to me the primitive and old-world figures that feasted the eyes of those admitted to the balcony, where common men might learn what and how their rulers eat.

There came homely old princes, with white hair, and breeches which never knew what braces meant;—a watch in each fob (in the exploded *macaroni* fashion), and long, long *queues*, those simplest of all symbols of etiquette. There might be seen stately and substantial ladies, decorated in all the German *grandezza* which so amused Bettina when Goethe's mother dressed herself to receive Madame de Stäel. There might be smelt the miscellaneously arranged odours of things savoury and things sweet which distinguish a German dinner. There might be heard (O shame to a music-loving family* like the Royalties of Saxony!), among

* One of the pleasantest passages in Dr. Burney's "Musical Tour in Germany" describes the visit he paid Nymphenburg (a palace three miles from Munich), where he was presented to the Electress Dowager of Saxony, whose opera of "Talestri" was then on the point of being performed at the Bavarian Court. Her brother, the Elector, too, was a fair player on the *viol da gamba*. And the Doctor speaks in high strains of his performance, as well as of the style of the Dowager's singing, which had been taught her by Porpora. After an evening spent in the interchange of musical conversation, when his Highness and the court supped in the same great hall and public manner in which they had dined, "I went," says Burney, "with Guadagni and the rest of the principal performers, to make my court during the supper. * * * The lords in waiting offered us refreshments, and the Elector condescended to ask Guadagni if he gave a

the noises of knives and forks and the bustling of perspiring servitors, the tinkle of a pianoforte, or the screech of an Italian air, sung by some well-worn *cantatrice*, who had been lured from the macaroni and *polenta* of her own land to become a fixture at the court of Saxony. And those who looked to see who the pianist might be (compelled, poor soul! to wear a full court dress for the occasion) must have turned away, wondering at the odd forms taken by the much-vaunted patronage of Music in Germany, —especially if they were gifted with the spirit of prophecy, and had already picked up the conviction that a new and brilliant genius was abroad in the person of Carl Maria von Weber!

I confess, whenever I reflect upon such an appropriation of the services of Genius as this— when I think of the "*Concert-Stück*" disturbed by the stirring of a salad, or of the exquisite *Sonata* in A flat, Op. 39, passing unheard in the midst of the discussion of those mighty puddings in

supper to the Englishman and his other company; meaning Panzachi, Rauzzini, and Naumann: he answered, that he should give us bread and cheese and a glass of wine. 'Here,' cried the Elector, emptying two dishes of game on a plate, 'send that to your apartments.'"

which a German cook excels—the corruption of Radicalism rises strong within me. I verily believe, that had I known the nature of the duty which the position of Weber at Dresden demanded from him, while I was in the full glow of enthusiasm consequent on the enjoyment of "Euryanthe," I must have shaken the dust of Pillnitz from my feet, with something of a bitter and disdainful feeling,—instead of turning round and admiring the fine but heavy group which it made when seen in conjunction with two embrowned chestnut trees, ere a sudden bend in the road to Löhmen hid it from my sight.

CHAPTER II.

ORGAN-PLAYING.—1840.

Characteristics of the organ—Visit to Herr Schneider—Inaccessibility of the Dresden houses—The *Sophien-Kirche*—Its interior—The organ by Silbermann—Its sweetness of tone—Herr Schneider's performance—Bach's fugues—Improvisation—Moral of the instrument—Sunday morning service—*Corales*—Admirable accompaniment—Henry Isak—Catholic church—Cremona violins—Another Silbermann organ—Flatness of Diapason—Morlacchi's music—Picturesque group—Artificial *Soprani*—A Sabbath thought in Dresden—A postscript concerning the Silbermann organs.

I LIKED Dresden even better in 1840 than in 1839. The weather was brighter—the town seemed more tranquilly engaging; and the pictures in the Gallery had taken the look of old familiar friends.—Dresden, too, was doomed to be a place of musical compensation to me for failures and disappointments encountered elsewhere. The

repayment for Berlin shortcomings, which, in 1839, I found in my first introduction to "Euryanthe," took, in 1840, a form more precious—if that could be—because more unique, by bringing me acquainted with the consummate organ-playing of Herr Schneider.

I will not libel any musician by asking him if he be fond of the instrument. The further removed he be from personality in his preferences of Art—the more devotedly addicted to Thought in its noblest, if not most excursive, flights—the more exquisitely will he relish, the more eagerly will he return to those grave and sublime pleasures—to those oracular utterances, as it were, in which musical Truth and Poetry, of the highest order, make themselves known. After a London season of fever and competition and excitement, when the newest wonder-player has been hardly heard before he has been pushed off his stool of popularity by the newest singer—when one strain of music has been hurried out of the memory by some other of a more seizing piquancy,—to find in the midst of the comparative quiet of a German town, and the yet more modest tranquillity of an occupied but not a dazzling career, an instrumentalist who,

in his way, might challenge the Liszts and the Paganinis of his century,—was as great a gratification to the mind as his artistic exhibitions were a delight to the ear. And to me the gratification was doubled, inasmuch as it came by way of sequel to the traces of Bach I had been exploring at Leipsic.

The weariness which the paltry "Die Beiden Schützen" of Lortzing, at the Opera House, had left upon my spirits, was only half effaced by a long morning among the Venetian pictures in the Gallery: when, as I was sitting at dinner, on a certain Saturday, a promised note of introduction was handed to me, which privileged me to present myself at Herr Schneider's door. By the way, this simple ceremony was in 1840 by no means so easily to be performed at Dresden as elsewhere. In no town that I have ever visited was it so difficult to find out your acquaintances. Bells were scarce; door-plates, so far as I could see, were utterly unknown. The first floor knew nothing of the cunning of the second—especially when the latter was inquired for in bad English German; and in every house I approached—to judge from the silence and impenetrability and difficulty of access which

prevailed—the inhabitants might, one and all, have been suffering under an epidemic dun-*phobia*. To the third story, however, of the mansion where Herr Schneider carries on his own studies and directs those of others, I was guided by the full chord of many voices; and, for the one only time in Dresden, I found him whom I came to seek without that running to and fro, and that hesitation of servants, which take so much of its edge off the pleasure of a first visit.

It was late in the day when I paid my visit; and the artist had been occupied among his musical avocations since the lark's hour of rising. But when I told him how short the duration of my stay in Dresden must be, he sent for the keys of the church and the bellows-blower, as if he was doing the most natural thing instead of the greatest favour imaginable — without any superfluous words between us. Indeed, profuse thanks would have suited ill with his hearty plainness of manner. And we were out of the house, and on the road to one of the rarest musical pleasures I ever enjoyed, as if we had known one another for years, within ten minutes of his breaking the seal of Mendelssohn's friendly letter.

The *Sophien-Kirche*, or Evangelical Church, which we reached after passing down two or three of the dark and narrow streets in which Dresden abounds, is one of those bleak and melancholy Lutheran buildings where the destroyer and the image-breaker have left their visible traces. It once belonged to a Franciscan convent; and a superbly enriched portal, opening upon the *Kloster Platz*, remains to tell what the rest of the building has been. Its interior aspect is yet more fragmentary, and clearly indicative of sack and plunder. The church is supported by a double row of columns, with a large and irregular gallery stretching round one half of it. The vault and pillars are debased by parsimonious whitewash; a few birdcage-like pews are hung up and down on its high walls: it has a few quaint old pictures, a mouldering monument or so, surmounted by a crucifix; and the same papistical symbol above the dingy *rococo* of the high altar. The fading of daylight gave these objects that sad and sombre hue which Time has imparted to more than one picture, where a like assemblage has been combined by Weenix or some other such painter of interiors. There was something, too, in the reverberation

of our feet, as we went up the gallery stairs, which said more to my fancy than it would be at all discreet to print. The best got-up scene could not have been made so appropriate for the music of meditation—which organ-music is.

Herr Schneider's instrument stands in a corner of the gallery, clad in a white case with silvered pipes, and decked out with a quantity of *rococo* gilt garlands. It has only two key-boards, each four octaves and a half, in visible register; thirty-four stops; and a long pedal-board, nearly as well worn as St. Peter's toe in the Vatican. The sound proceeding from the first handful of keys put down, informed me of the neighbourhood of something surpassing after its kind. This is one of the Silbermann organs; and never heard I pipes of such a ripe and fascinating sweetness of tone, from the lowest *elephant* pedal C to the *skylark* C *altissimo*;—no hissing, no wheezing, no lumbering, no growling,—none of that ferocity of sound which makes some of our famous English specimens surgical to the ear. Compared, indeed, with aught in modern organ-building, the Silbermann instruments, at Dresden, are what the sumptuous

ruby glass of the Middle Ages is to the ripest-red piece of new Bohemian manufacture. Only a few weeks before I had been listening to our own noble organs at Christchurch in London, and in the Town-hall at Birmingham. A few weeks afterwards I was admiring a magnificent musical structure in progress of erection in the Westminster Abbey of the French—the cathedral at St. Denis. So that I was not without some opportunity of comparison, to warrant me in simile-making: and it is to be remembered that, as regards tone, the difference between player and player is little to be felt in the case of the instrument in question.

In all that regards hand, and foot, and mind —firmness of the first, brilliancy of the second, and concentration of the third—Herr Schneider was more excellent, after his kind, than his organ. Drawing out a dear shabby old book from his depository, he asked me to choose which of Bach's grand fugues he was to play me; and, almost ere I could mention those with which I was most familiar, had begun to add to my treasure by opening one in B minor, which then I had not heard. Those who treat organ-playing as "a black business," to which

they bend themselves with frowning brows, and coat-sleeves turned up half-way to the shoulders —the school of kickers, and swingers to and fro, who make much exertion cover up very little skill—might have taken a lesson from this admirable artist, whose hands, as they glided away over the keys ("*worked away*" is the established phrase), were bringing out into their fullest glory all those magnificent chains of sound—all those replies, and suspenses, and accumulations, which, with a calm but never-tiring munificence, the noble old *Cantor* of the *Thomas-Schule* has lavished in his compositions. Perhaps a finer specimen of these does not exist than in the fugue in E minor, with which Herr Schneider next indulged me; where the subject—

spreading in form like a wedge, offers such excellent scope for the amplification of science and the arrangement of climax. I withdrew to the further corner of the gallery, where twilight was now fast sinking; and, while listening to this marvellous performance, lost the personality both of composer and the performer,

more completely, perhaps, than I have ever done. It was neither Bach nor Schneider: the building was filled, to running over, with august and stately Music; and the old childish feeling of mystery and delight which, in the days when I was sparingly admitted to the acquaintanceship of any instrument whatsoever, the gigantic sounds of the organ used to awaken in me, came back.

After one or two more glorious displays of entire mastery over the key and pedal-board—"It is too dark for us to see any more of Bach," said my liberal host; "so you must excuse what I am going to do:" and, with that, he at once struck off into an improvisation of rare beauty of figure, and affluence of device. The subject was not at all a recondite one; simple and bold, and at first I fancied a little drily treated: what, indeed, is there that would not sound so after the unfoldings of Bach? But, whether the admirable artist was excited by the keen relish I showed, or whether it is the nature of such powers as his to sustain and to excite themselves, —as he went on, the depth of his science was surpassed by the brilliancy of his fancy. Taken merely in its most matter-of-fact sense, as a

display which proved nothing, here were memory, combination, promptitude, invention, and mechanical skill, united. I may be laughed at, but I could not help imagining that the exercise of a power at once implying thought, self-mastery, and a patient use of physical strength, could hardly have been carried to so high a perfection without its favourable moral influences; and that, if it were so, herein, and not from their being erected in churches, might lie the superior sacredness of organs beyond other instruments—herein some holiness in the performance of the music written for them.—By the time that Herr Schneider had brought his improvisation to a close, I could hardly distinguish either himself or organ from among the mass of gloomy shadows that had fallen round me; and I left the church in that pleasantly thoughtful state which suits so well with Dresden, and in which there is rest and not excitement.—Lights were gleaming up and down in the windows of the high houses surrounding the *Neumarkt:* here and there a solitary footfall was to be heard, the sounds of daily traffic being for the most part over.

At nine on the following morning I was again

at Herr Schneider's elbow, in the organ-loft of the *Sophien Kirche*, to bear him company through the services of the morning. He had warned me that the plain forms of Lutheran worship forbade his exercising his craft with anything like fantasy; but I would not have exchanged what I did hear for the most elaborate performance which hands and feet in concord could have completed. Before the service commenced, to an ample congregation, he treated us to a brief prelude on the full organ, of great majesty and brilliancy, as clear in design, and as symmetrical in elaboration, as though it were an *impromptu fait à loisir*. Then, while accompanying the psalms—five or six of which were most admirably sung by a choir of eighteen boys and young men—the extent of resource brought by him to bear on what might be esteemed a prosaic task was to me little less astonishing than the force he had shown in mastering the difficulties of Bach.* The interludes between the

* If some will understand the nervousness with which those who have fervently admired any work of art or artist, return to either after a long interval, more will enter into my pleasure on recently convincing myself that the praise above expressed should be heightened, not abated, were the paragraph to be written anew. I was enabled, in October last, to benefit by Herr

verses were substantially and solidly dignified, yet sufficiently rich in ideas to set up for a twelvemonth some of the renowned improvisers I have heard; while the artful and unexpected management of the stops, so as to produce every

Schneider's playing yet more largely than I did on my earlier visits to Dresden; and more clearly, than I could formerly, did I discern his supremacy in the treatment of the highest among instruments. It is not the least among the inequalities of the lot of Genius, that while Paganinis have libraries written in their honour, and Catalanis can buy estates out of the surplus of their gains, an artist possessing gifts of a higher order than either possessed, and superior to both in having put all executive difficulties beneath his feet, should be known in a circle so comparatively limited, and should count his modest gains in copper as compared with their gold.—It is well that something beyond these possessions goes to the making of happiness; that even in the world of imagination as well as a feverish life, there should be a serene life: contenting the ambitions of those who lead it. In this point of view, it is pleasant to think of so highly-endowed, active, and cheerful a man as Herr Schneider; full of quiet energy; satisfied within the round of his daily duties; not wholly without recognition from the outer world—of which the relish may be all the more intense, from its being rare in proportion to the remarkable claims recognized. Time has not yet touched this magnificent player.—It is all the more needful to add such a note, from the failure made by this admirable artist when he was this year brought to London, to exhibit as a concert attraction. The causes of his failure were too obvious to any one acquainted with German life and habits, or with the peculiar instrument on which Herr Schneider played, to require explanation or apology; but, with the general public, some testimony like the above may perhaps be not wholly useless in 1853.

variety of *crescendo* and *diminuendo*, entirely precluded the occupation of the swell. Though I stood close by, I was unable, from a want of familiarity with the manipulations of the instrument, and the rapidity with which the changes were executed, to take any note of the successions and mixtures of stops employed. *Receipts* in such a matter are of little use to the half-taught, and none to the full-grown, artist.

Between the *corales*, which, thus sung and thus accompanied, I would fain have had crystallized for the benefit of all English choirs (could the miracle of the tunes frozen in *Munchausen's* horn be repeated), I confess myself to have been busier in turning over the venerable and well-thumbed music-books, and gathering what I could from their pages, than in trying to translate the drowsy and not very clear accents of the *pfarrer* into a service I could follow. There is much to be said some future day about these German psalm-tunes: a store of pleasant anecdote belongs to them. One of the most beautiful, for instance, that I heard that morning—Nun ruhen alle Wälder—had been in its early days as secular a melody as "Rousseau's Dream." It was the composition (so M. Mainzer had in-

formed me in his amusing "Esquisses Musicales") of the famous Henry Isak, on the occasion of his being summoned from Inspruck to Munich three hundred years ago—a farewell tune, which had got into every German mouth, and was seized hold of by the Reformers, on Rowland Hill's principles of turning profane music to good account. Harmonized, and finely sung by many voices, as I heard it, it seemed unfit for any service save that of the Temple. Other of the tunes were by Herman, Pretorius, Crüger, Dr. Martin Luther himself; and in many antiphonal parts of the service the Ambrosian and Gregorian chants seemed to have been retained, as well as the Popish crucifix and candles on the altar.

Without any levity intended, the traveller may be of all musical religions in Dresden without the slightest discomfort; for the order of divine worship admits of his participating in the Catholic services at the Court church after the Lutheran church has poured out its congregation. The two buildings stand as near to each other as their spirit is widely apart. Each, however, has its Silbermann organ. There is a third in the *Frauen-Kirche* (the most theatrical-looking

church I ever entered), which I did not hear, the Catholic instrument being reputed as the finest. The musical services in which it bears a part have enjoyed high repute among the tourists. I had been told to listen to some Cremona violins in the orchestra, of a singular perfection of tone: I had been warned, too, that the choir contained a pair of those now happily obsolete curiosities which were the consequence of the Romish prohibition of female assistance in the service of the Mass. The Catholic church, though its interior has a somewhat waste air, from the absence of gilding and pictorial ornament, is a spacious and handsome edifice. The nave was crowded with the congregation—the men on the one side, on the other the women. Some of the royal family were to be seen from their tribune overlooking the altar; and there were the tinkling bells, and the incense-clouds, and the gorgeously-clad priests,—which, I am free to confess, in place of offending me as the "mummery" which stern Protestant travellers seem to think it a point of conscience to account them, never fail to quicken my Papistical sympathies by striking the imagination, without, I would fain hope, spoiling the heart. But the reverberation in the building is

so great, that the organ, though most cleverly played by Herr Klengel, and a thorough Silbermann in its silver-sweet tones, did not assert its superiority over its kinsman I had just been hearing. The sweetness, again, of the Cremona violins, led by Herr Lipinski, was largely impaired to my ear by the flatness of their pitch, which, a twelvemonth before, had tempted me to believe in the rejuvenescence of Madame Schröder Devrient's

The tone of the orchestra sounded mawkish, independently of the intrinsic savourlessness of the Mass which it was performing—a *fade* composition by Morlacchi was that.—What a sickly contrast to those stout old Lutheran tunes!—As we were going up to the music gallery, a child with long German hair, and in a dark palmer-like cloak, came up to my kind *cicerone*, and, putting its little hand in his, trotted on by his side a little way: precisely the figure which the neo-Catholic painters dress in a surplice, and arm with a branch of lilies, for some sacred picture: precisely the figure, too, to set off my honest and kind-hearted con-

ductor; and as the sun fell upon them through a window-slit, as they were mounting the massive graystone staircase to the music gallery, I thought I had never seen a more engaging picture.—The little door was thrown open which was to admit me to a place among the fiddles and drums. While my foot was as yet on the threshold, out came a long-drawn sound—parcel squeak, parcel warble—which had well nigh driven me back with disgust at its shrillness and its falsity,—and shock at its disproportion to the six-feet-high and burly human creature whence it issued. In its days of perfection, however, I could have fancied that it possessed such subtle union of piercing and oily tone as distinguishes an oboe; and, bad as it was,—and bad as was the second *soprano*, of like quality, which went along with it,—I could readily conceive that there might lie in its use peculiarities of effect which can be produced by no other vocal organs. But even this conviction, honestly stated in despite of antipathy, could not reconcile me to the far-famed music of the Catholic church in Dresden. There is decrepitude in it: the feebleness of old age without its venerable aspect. An instrumental symphony performed in one portion of

the service was little newer in its forms than if Hullmandel or Graun had devised it. Somehow or other, the Italian style—whether in composition or performance, in church or opera—becomes intolerable in Germany.

The enthusiast had better, if he would keep the devout feelings which the massive congregational singing in the Evangelical Church is calculated to inspire, give himself up to an hour of silent meditation before the *Madonna di San Sisto* in the gallery:—at least, I know that her holy and spiritual smile bore me company along my favourite walk on the Brühl Terrace, in the quiet half hour which elapsed last before my joining the mid-day table.

THE MADONNA DI SAN SISTO.

A SABBATH THOUGHT IN DRESDEN.

Couldst thou, O man! with thine own will, uprear
Thyself so nigh Divinity? thus show
The mysteries of the heavens? or didst thou bow
To Power invisible, with child-like fear
Submitting hand and heart?—It was so. Here
Is GOD, not man! yon forms angelic glow
With His own radiant spirit.—Art is slow,
Fruitless, and cold, by this unblest. Draw near
And worship, then, my soul!—'tis holy ground,
Nor thou idolatrous. The King of kings,

Who folds Eternity beneath his wings,
Yet doth with love his smallest child surround,
Is here, too, manifest with glory crowned,
And calls on thee for praise, through fading human things!

October 25, 1840.

A postscript may, not impertinently, be added with regard to the organs at Dresden and its vicinity—or rather, perhaps, with regard to the organs built by the Silbermann family, which may be studied in the Saxon capital and its vicinity with great advantage.

Subsequent experience and opportunities for comparison would dispose me to emphasize rather than to mitigate the foregoing panegyric. Perfectly aware, as every one who thinks must be, of the amount of adventitious effect gained by locality in the case of all organs—not to speak of such delicate matters as association, the humour of the listener, &c. &c., which have, however, a large part in determining pleasure — there is still, I apprehend, a large and important balance in favour of the beauty of tone of these Silbermann organs. As regards modern organ-building, an exception is claimed by

Mooser's admirable instrument at Swiss Fribourg; while among organs of an elder date, due honour must be done to such magnificent structures as Gabler's fantastically-planned but beautiful organ at the monastery of Weingarten in Suabia, and also to the splendid and sonorous Dutch organs at Haarlem, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Groningen—and even at Gouda, where the traveller who goes up to look at the painted glass, may, perchance, find his ear caught by a wonderful *vox humana* from the "loft," telling that a poor player cannot spoil a fine instrument. —Then, the Austrian monasteries have their grand organs, possessing a sweetness, pomp, and authority, in noble harmony with the palatial grandeur of the holy houses which they help to furnish.—Many of the above I have now heard, but I have met with nothing comparable with the best of the Silbermann instruments. There is an admirable one, sadly neglected, at the miner's town of Frieberg—organ and town (if not town and organ) well worth the day's excursion from Dresden, which a visit to both will demand. If Music had as many poetical, as the art has practical writers, a more fascinating subject would hardly be found than a pilgrimage

to the great organs of Europe—with their localities, their history, and their associations, duly counted. For the instrument is like a church or other edifice—a thing which becomes of itself a shrine of resort and recollection, gaining thereby an adventitious, and legendary, and progressive interest, such as belong to no old violin, or harp,—scarcely, even, to the trombones discovered under the lava of the buried cities of the kingdom of Naples, which have been revived, multiplied, and circulated, to the use and comfort of modern orchestral composers.—1853.

CHAPTER III.

THE OPERA FROM 1840 TO 1848.

Retirement of Madame Schröder Devrient—Character of this lady—Her *Fidelio*—Her *Lady Macbeth*—Comparison with Madame Pasta—Appearance of Herr Wagner as composer—"Rienzi"—The Court and the Barricades—Herr Wagner in Paris—His "*Fliegende Hollander*"—His "*Tannhaüser*"—Sketch of the story—Analysis of the music—Reception of the opera at Dresden—Arrogance of Herr Wagner in his judgment of former composers and of himself—Some theory of his peculiarities as representing the times we live in.

In the interval betwixt the years 1840 and 1848, the losses of the Dresden Opera were heavier than its gains. The great actress who threw all her strength and emotion into Weber's Shakspearian opera, ceased to appear on the stage; and the creative efforts made in the theatre, did not bring to light a new genius so much as a new element of decay and destruction for music.

The decline of Madame Schröder Devrient was more rapid than it should have been in a singer who is some years younger than the century.—But, in truth, a singer the lady never was, though she promised to become one in the early days when she appeared as *Pamina* in "Die Zauberflöte" at Vienna. Her voice, since I have known it, was capable of conveying poignant or tender expression, but was harsh, and torn—not so inflexible as incorrect. —It is a mistake to fancy that the German *prime donne* decline to attempt making an effect with executive brilliancy; they are as prodigal of *roulades* and shakes as the rest of the sisterhood—giving, however, the attempt in place of the reality; and only when their incompetency is made evident by comparison, falling back on that classical defence which sounds so well, costs so little, and has deceived so many,—"*What would you have? I am a German singer.*"—Madame Schröder Devrient resolved to be *par excellence* "the German dramatic singer." Earnest and intense as was her possession of the parts she attempted, her desire of presenting herself was little less vehement.—There is no possibility of an opera being

performed by a company, each of whom should be as resolute as she was never to rest, never for an instant to allow the spectator to forget his presence. She cared not whether she broke the flow of the composition, by some cry hardly on any note, or in any scale — by even *speaking* some word, for which she would not trouble herself to study the right musical emphasis or inflexion—provided, only, she succeeded in continuing to arrest the attention. Hence, in part, arose her extraordinary success in "Fidelio." That opera contains, virtually, only one acting character,—and with her it rests to intimate the thrilling secret of the whole story, to develope this link by link, in presence of the public, and to give the drama the importance of terror, suspense, and rapture when the spell is broken, by exhibiting the agony and the struggle of which she is the incessant victim. If the devotion, the disguise, and the hope of *Leonora*, the wife, were not for ever before us, the interest of the prison-opera would flag and wane into a cheerless and incurable melancholy. This Madame Schröder Devrient took care that it should never do. From her first entry upon the stage, it might

be seen that there was a purpose at her heart, which could make the weak strong, and the timid brave; quickening every sense, nerving every fibre, arming its possessor with disguise against curiosity, with persuasion more powerful than any obstacle, with expedients equal to every emergency. Though in what may be called the culminating point of the drama—the grave-digging scene in the vault—Malibran was the more fearful of the two, by her intense southern fervour, which blazed the brighter for its having been so forcibly constrained,—as regards the entire treatment of the part, Madame Schröder Devrient had the advantage. There was a life's love in the intense and trembling eagerness with which she passed in review the prisoners, when they were allowed to come forth into the air—for *he* might be among them! There was something subduing in the look of speechless affection with which she at last undid the chains of the beloved one, saved by her love — the mere remembrance of which makes the heart throb, and the eyes fill. — In "Norma," and "La Sonnambula," Madame Schröder Devrient failed, owing to her deficiency in vocal accomplish-

ment. In the former, too, she too freely indulged in the tendency of the Germans to attitudinize, when a queen or a priestess is the personage to be enacted.—I thought her *Valentine*, in "Les Huguenots," too much of a virago. There was not a touch of the French noble's daughter in her demeanour; she was the impetuous, angry, persecuted woman, whose hour of virgin elegance and virgin reserve had long been over.—But in another less popular work, the impression left by her on me was deep. This was in M. Chèlard's "Macbeth;" an opera which, in spite of the preposterous arrangement of the *libretto*, and of some music little less preposterous in its difficulty (considering it as calculated for German songstresses), contains some good points—some fine concerted pieces. None of these, however, dwell in my memory so vividly as the demeanour of the *Lady Macbeth*. One could not look at her without at once recollecting the ideal which Mrs. Siddons is reported to have conceived of this "grand, fiendish" character (to use her own epithets). "She had an idea," says Mrs. Jameson, "that *Lady Macbeth* must, from her Celtic origin, have been a small, fair, blue-eyed woman.

Bonduca, Fredegonde, Brunehault, and other Amazons of the Gothic ages, were of this complexion." Save in stature, the great German operatic actress (daughter by the way to the great *Lady Macbeth* of Germany, "*die grosse* Schröder") gave full justification to this fancy. With an alluring and dignified grace of manner was combined an aspect of evil—a sinister, far-reaching expression in her eyes, all the more terrible for their being at variance with those hues and contours which we have been used to associate with innocence and the tender affections. That which makes the flesh creep, in the name of "the *White* Devil,"* spoke in every line of Madame Schröder Devrient's face—in her honeyed and humble smile, as she welcomed the doomed King; in the mixture of ferocity and blandishment thrown by her into the scene of the murder; in the ghastly soliloquy of the

* When Nature can be *contradicted* by the might of power and passion within the frame, the effect is always more fearful than when she co-operates with sinister deeds and emotions by sinister preparations. Thus, there are few personations that I have heard so often referred to for their terrible fascination as the *Lucrezia Borgia* of Madame Ungher;—an undersized, colourless woman, without any extraordinary beauty, nobility, or wickedness of countenance.

soul that waked when the body was asleep. When I think of Pasta, as *Medea*, watching the bridal train pass by her, with her scarlet mantle gathered round her, the figure of Madame Schröder Devrient's *Lady Macbeth*, too, rises, as one of those visions concerning which young men are apt to rave and old men to dote. Apart from its musical interest, the stage has had few more striking personations.

But, except in the right of this inborn, inbred genius, the German and the Italian artist can hardly be mentioned on the same page. What Pasta *would* be, in spite of her uneven, rebellious, uncertain voice—a most magnificent singer — Madame Schröder Devrient did not care to be; though Nature, I have been assured, by those who heard her sing when a girl, had blessed her with a fresh, delicious *soprano* voice. In this respect, she is but one among the hundreds who have suffered from the ignorance and folly of German connoisseurship — from the obstinacy of national antipathy, which, so soon as Germany began to imagine the possibility of possessing an opera of its own, made it penal to sing with grace, taste, and vocal self-command; because such were the charac-

teristics of the Italian method.—Had she been trained under a wiser dispensation, Madame Schröder Devrient might have been singing by the side of Madame Sontag at this very day; and, when she retired, might have left behind her the character of a great dramatic vocalist, instead of the fame of a powerful actress who appeared in some German operas.

The Opera House at Dresden, during the years preceding the Revolution of 1848, also witnessed the production of certain musical dramas, by one who has since made some noise in the world, and who is likely to make more—noise, strictly speaking,—not music. I mean Herr Wagner, whose "Rienzi" had already been given in Dresden at the time of my second visit thither, and who was named as *kapell-meister* by the King of Saxony under conditions of almost friendly generosity. In 1840, Herr Wagner was not openly revolutionary; being in composition apparently an imitator of the least amiable peculiarities of Herr Meyerbeer, and showing, it may be apprehended, few signs of that spirit, which, in later times—those of the German riots of 1848—sent him out upon a barricade with the purpose of discrowning the

very King whose bread he had been eating.* "Rienzi" was pronounced to be dull, overcharged, and very long. It was endured as a work belonging to Dresden, as other operatic pieces of dullness in other German capitals have been, but, I believe, followed the common lot of local successes, and never travelled far beyond the barriers of the Saxon capital.

It would seem as if the favour with which this "Rienzi" was received, and the position in which its composer was placed, ripened to fever heat that desire to distinguish himself in progress by destruction, which passes for a generous ambition with persons imperfectly organized or crookedly cultivated. But earlier

* In justification of the censure conveyed in the above phrase, the English reader must be reminded that many of the musical appointments about German theatres are direct court appointments; and that unhappily for both the aristocratic and the popular side of the question, the courts of Germany do not yet represent the people. The *maestro* was presented by the King to his people of Dresden rather than forced by the people of Dresden upon their King. "But Wagner meant well," said an earnest and thorough-going defender of the composer with whom I was discussing the baseness and disloyalty (in the large sense) of his political courses; "he meant well, I assure you. He was really very fond of his King. He would have made him President of the Republic!"

than this, a prophet, an innovator, a celebrity, Herr Wagner had resolved to be; and—weak in musical gifts—he appears to have entered on his quest of greatness by a profound contempt of all other musical celebrities. The confessions which he has recently published, reveal an amount of arrogant and irritable disdain for all opera composers save himself, happily rare in the annals of artistic self-assertion.—His point of departure was to be the union of poetry and music. Operas were to be made of an exquisite completeness, in which both arts were to find the very fullest expression; and since *librettists*, however ingenious, are not always the best of poets, Herr Wagner (wisely enough) resolved to be his own *librettist*.

In this capacity he has proved himself to be strong and felicitous as an inventor, though less excellent as a lyrist, than his self-commendation would have us believe. The wild sea-tale of "The Flying Dutchman" was a happy choice for his second opera, in one desiring to please by legendary interest, grown weary of grand historical pictures in which there is no history; or of comic intrigues of "cloak and sword," in

which there is more intrigue than comedy, and more "cloak and sword" (or costume) than either!—This second opera was completed,—words and music,—while Herr Wagner was resident in Paris; and was offered by him to the managers of the *Grand Opera* there.—They were wise:—recognized the strange, supernatural capability of the drama, but were repelled by the extravagance and crudity of the music. Accordingly they rejected the score, and purchased the poem.—They were less wise, however, in entrusting the latter to be set by their worthy chorus-master, M. Dietsch, since he succeeded in producing music less acceptable than even the original composition by Herr Wagner might have been—and thus killed the story.

Herr Wagner's "Fliegende Holländer" was produced complete at Dresden; and there, in spite of direct royal patronage, in spite of a certain novelty of style, in spite of the acceptance of "Rienzi," and the vogue brought to every theatre by fitting up a genius of its own, the opera, I am assured, failed on its representation. Such immediate failure we know to be no criterion of ultimate success, or intrinsic merit; but it seems to me explained, since I have perused

the music. A spinning song and chorus is to be remembered as pleasing, characteristic; a wild sea-tune, too, as being audaciously broken in rhythm, and built on a phrase of the most desperate platitude; but the rest of the work produced on me merely an impression of grim violence and dreary vagueness, which, till then at least, had never been produced in such a fullness of ugliness by the music of a clever man.

Next in order came Herr Wagner's "Tannhaüser." This opera was given for the first time at Dresden in the year 1845, with Madame Schröder Devrient, Mademoiselle Wagner, and Herr Tichatschek in the principal characters; and at Dresden excited the highest temporary enthusiasm on its production. Though the rapture was, at that period, communicated to no other German theatre, considering the events which have followed the rehabilitation of the opera by Dr. Liszt at Weimar,—it is a work to be spoken of in some detail, as the latest appearance in composition previous to 1848, that may make some figure in the annals of German opera.

The *libretto* is more than ordinarily picturesque—in cast of incident, contrast of character, and charm of situation: well chosen, too,

for Germany, as possessing something of that inner meaning which has given the stories of "Don Juan" and of "Faust" so strong a hold on the national heart. Tieck had already treated the myth of the Pagan goddess *Venus*, dwelling, as a temptress, in the heart of the Thuringian hills, and luring Christian knights to their earthly ruin and eternal damnation, in his tale of "The Runenberg."* There are few legends which exercise a deeper and more troubling fascination.— The drama opens in the hill-cavern of the demon enchantress. There, suffused with a roseate light, may be seen the Mœnads, the Bacchanals, the Syrens of old mythology, weaving their voluptuous choral dances round the enthralled knight and his terrible paramour—

* The reader who cares to follow the subject a step further will find some information gracefully collected by Mr. Monckton Milnes, as a prelude to two ballad-poems, in his "Poems Legendary and Historical" (1844). A foot note there reminds us that opera had already been dealing with the legends of *Dame Venus*, before Herr Wagner cast his eye upon them. The ring placed in mockery on the finger of the statue in "Zampa," which gives occasion to so dramatic a *finale*, also originally belonged to the Pagan *Armida*; and the legend in which it figures, had been, many years before, done into a ballad (I think) by Mr. M. G. Lewis.

terrible, because she cannot give him complete felicity. The spirit of the fine lines—

> " Whilst in her arms at Capua he lay,
> The world fell mouldering from his hand each hour "—

stirs the minstrel-warrior beyond the power of the warmest enjoyment, or the smoothest blandishment to appease. He must be up and doing. He *must* have active, passionate, painful life again: he must return to the earth to which he belongs—to pains better than the bliss of a faëry land, whose sweetness is hell. In vain the temptress tries to retain him—first, by new sorceries for the senses; then, by taunts which remind him that for earth and heaven he is already accursed, by once having entered her bower! Even this taunt (by popular faith accepted as a truth) only steels the courageous man to further resistance. He defies the power of the Goddess; he denies her threats; and, calling on the name of Mary Mother, breaks in an instant the fearful spell.—He is alone on earth, among the Thuringian hills, in the early morning:—alone and accursed; remembering, now his delirium has passed, that the fearful sentence urged on him by the fiend-goddess is true.—On one side of the stage comes a herd-boy singing

on the rock; on the other, a company of pilgrims slowly winds its way downward from a neighbouring monastery, chanting a hymn as they set their faces towards Rome.—He will go with them: perhaps, through much suffering and penitence, the brand for having commerced with the Pagan goddess of sensual pleasure may be wrung out of his heart.

But the *Tannhaüser* is not permitted yet to fulfil his humble purpose. The *Landgrave* of Thuringia and his hunting train, with knights, pages, and *minnesingers*, are also out on the hill that morning. They recognise in him a lost court-ornament and comrade with joyful surprise. They will have him return with them to the world of tournaments, and songs, and fair women. A brother *minnesinger*, *Wolfram of Eschenbach*, urges the truant more warmly than the rest; telling him how the daughter of the *Landgrave*, the *Princess Elizabeth*, has of late grown melancholy, and has withdrawn from every festival, like one pining with some secret care. This noble *Wolfram* has long followed her with unrequited love; but, like a true lover of the days of chivalry, he would see the wounded heart of his lady healed—though by a rival. His appeals the *Tannhaüser* cannot

resist. The Knight will return to his old life—the life of earthly love, and song, and blessedness.—The pilgrims pass on their way to Rome without the penitent; and he hastens to the lady who has been so long waiting for the truant.

They meet; and the innocent *Elizabeth*, tormented by no suspicions of her knight, and easily appeased by his vague excuses for his long and strange absence, again joins the world, and throws the palace open to feast and to song in honour of the *Master-Singer's* return. — There is a solemn festival of minstrels in the presence of a large and noble company. The theme, for which the prize of song is to be given, is Love; and this the minstrels sing in their turns—each one after his own fashion; but each one answered and rebuked by *Tannhaüser*—the heart of the *Princess* hanging on every word that he utters, on every string of his harp!—The rival *minnesingers* become angered by his triumphant domination and superiority in the art of song. Bitter words are exchanged; swords are drawn; sarcasm follows sarcasm, till the *Tannhaüser*, half-delirious with passion and excitement, turns madly round on his comrades, and tells them that they know not what love is—that none can know

it, in all its height and depth, its delicious sweetness and its burning desires, who have not paid homage at its altar, in the magic palace of *Venus*. No sooner has the truth burst from his lips like fire—the truth which proclaims him to be accursed and outcast from Christian fellowship—than the whole assembly is in uproar. They will fall on the idolater, and slay him. But there is a love stronger than that of the Pagan temptress. The very maiden, to whom his avowal reveals her past desolation and her future doom, stands betwixt him and the indignation of the horror-stricken knights. Their swords shall only reach him through her bosom. She will rescue him that he may have time to repent. There is still hope: there may be still grace. And driven forth in opprobrium, and laden by her gentle love with a remorse yet more terrible to bear, the *Tannhaüser* totters forth from among his old brothers in arms and in song, to follow the pilgrim band—to seek him who can bind and loose—if so be that the eternal punishment of his sin may be remitted by years of mortal repentance and suffering.

The winter comes; and we are again on the hill beneath the monastery, and with the Cross

in sight before which the *Tannhaüser* was found kneeling when the court of *Dame Venus* had vanished. There now kneels another afflicted one, holier than he. The *Princess* will there await the return of the pilgrims from Rome. Her redeemed one may be among their number. Alas! they come at last, and wind their upward way, chanting slowly the old hymn of pilgrimage; and he is not among them.—But the true and holy maiden will still wrestle with despair for his sake; and she prays, with faith and passion, to be allowed to offer up her life to its Giver—if only the vengeance may pass away from *him!*

The prayer has hardly died away—the Lady has hardly retreated, when the lost pilgrim arrives; haggard, maddened, aged, reckless with the excess of his misery. He is a second time confronted on the old spot by *Wolfram*, who asks for tidings of his pilgrimage to Rome; to which *Tannhaüser* replies, with a fiendish earnestness, by demanding, in turn, the way to the lost cave of *Dame Venus*, for thither will he go, and there, if he may for awhile, drown the consciousness of his anguish and the memory of the curse laid on him.—For the Holy Father had assured him that neither fasting, nor tears, nor

prayers, nor meditation, could redeem the soul of any man who had once tarried within those demon precincts. "Till the Holy Cross shall break forth into leafage," was the awful sentence, "such an one can have no salvation." So, thrust out by Heaven, the outcast will seek his fit comrades, and calls on them wildly to receive him again. In vain does *Wolfram* try to hold back his wretched companion. *Dame Venus* has heard her slave, and is willing to reply—again the vision of her glory begins to open—and afar are heard the siren songs and the impassioned dances, and her own voice, bidding the truant "hither" through the rosy mist. The *Tannhaüser*, now frantic betwixt agony and desire, breaks from the friendly arms which strive to detain him, and rushes towards perdition. One step more and he will be there;—but *Wolfram* calls on the name of *Elizabeth*;—and the spell breaks, and the sensual rout vanishes, and the magic cavern disappears; and the two are again on the haunted hill alone.—As before, the *Tannhaüser* is arrested by the pilgrim hymn, this time following a corpse to its rest. While the bearers extinguish their torches, the bier of *Elizabeth* is set down. A part of her prayer

has already been heard. The angels have taken her home: and, behold, a sign that the rest is granted! For the crucifix breaks forth into green leaves; and, saved from the snares of infernal love, by earthly love made complete in Heaven, the heart-broken, exhausted penitent, sinks down beside the bier of the sainted maiden, and dies—atoned for, assoiled, reconciled, and accepted.

Meagre as is the above sketch, it will be seen from it that "Tannhaüser" has no common opera book; and that with such a theme, a picture of romantic and elevated beauty might have been wrought by a hand worthy to treat it. If ever subject was musical this is—simple, suggestive, rich in colour, rich in contrast, rich in poetry.—But how am I to speak of the manner in which the musician has set his own drama? I shall hardly be able to represent my impressions without appearing to those, who have not suffered under this extraordinary opera, in the light of one indulging in hyperbole and caricature; for, in truth, I have never been so blanked, pained, wearied,* *insulted* even (the word is not

* It is fair to state, that though Herr Wagner, by the production of the opera in question, had taken his place as one of the

too strong), by a work of pretension as by this same "Tannhaüser." I could not have conceived it possible that any clever person could deliberately produce what seems to me so false, paradoxical, and at such fierce variance with true artistic feeling, on system, before I sat through the opera, and read the "Hallelujah" vented by its maker in homage to his new revelations, which he has been tempted by his own vanity and by the injudicious praise of others, to put forth.

The first general idea derived from Herr Wagner's music to this romantic story, was its entire discordance with its subject. For how could be imagined tale which gave wider scope for melody?—melody sacred in the pilgrims' canticle—melody voluptuous in the court of *Dame Venus*—melody chivalresque in the minstrel contest. In accordance with this spirit a large part of the *libretto* is written in tolerable

composers of young Germany, some years before the Revolution of 1848 (his "Tannhaüser" thus legitimately coming within the range of this work)—my own acquaintance with its music on the stage is of more recent date. Hence, I have not been called upon to mitigate my impressions under the idea which should never be lost sight of, that distance may lend exasperation to the temper, as well as enchantment to the view.—1853.

rhymed verse. Yet it may be asserted, that no opera existed before "Tannhaüser,"—since the cradle-days of Opera—so totally barren of rhythmical melody; the two subjects on which the overture is based being absolutely the only two *motivi* deserving the name from beginning to end of the drama. Now, wherefore (on system or no system), if the pilgrims were allowed a tune, the minstrels were to be denied one, it would puzzle Herr Wagner to tell. What is more noticeable, one of the two said melodies, the pilgrims' hymn, is as utterly clear of the character of a canticle as the *notturno* in Mendelssohn's "Midsummer Night's Dream" music, being a tuneable and graceful strain, but in no respect, either as regards intrinsic character or established form, religious. It would seem as if chance had determined the proceedings of a musician more poor in melodic inspiration than any predecessor or contemporary; that when a tune had presented itself, he used it without caring for its fitness—that when tunes would not come, he forced his way along by a recitative as uncouth and tasteless as it is ambitious,—and as if his system had come upon him as an after-thought, by way of apology for him-

self, and depreciation of his betters.—To return, —in the magic cave, so harsh, shrill, crackling, and grotesque are the sounds of chorus and dance which surround *Dame Venus*, as to spirit up associations anything rather than voluptuous or fascinating—strange whimsies of skeleton dances in the air, with their distant (but not dulcet) sound of lean bones rattling.—Then the minstrel contest, instead of its offering a flow of song, growing deeper, wider, more musical, and more impassioned, as enthusiasm kindles enthusiasm in the strife, is but a heavy preachment of several men, set to meagre and formless harp accompaniment. A wearisome straining after literal, verbal expression in music (which, however plausible, is utterly false as a principle if it is perpetually employed) is maintained throughout this work, till the ear no longer retains the power of being moved; and by the time that the great scene of the third act was reached—that in which *Tannhaüser* narrates his pilgrimage to Rome to his brethren in song—my attention, wearied by unfulfilled expectation, and abused by one discordant scene after another, refused any longer to follow a work in which every sensation of pleasure, and every principle

of beauty, were so ceaselessly outraged. I remember the howling, whining, bawling of Herr Tichatschek (to sing, or vocally to declaim this scene is impossible) acco manied with and disturbed by an orchestra, infuriate where it was not confused, but all idea of art or poetical sensation is gone. What the new thing may be which Herr Wagner has put in its place, let others dispute and decide—it has, at all events, no affinity with that which the masters of the musical stage have done before him.

But allowing this opera to be accepted as a symphony,* accompanied by scenery, bearing part in a drama intoned rather than sung, I cannotfin its symphonic or orchestral portion much more admirable than the wild and over-wrought recitative, which it is to check, support, and alter-

* Thus must Herr Wagner's operas be accepted, if the composer's thought and purpose are to be met sympathetically, and if his choir of admirers are to be believed. I was speaking to one of them of the utter ruin which must overtake vocal art, if composers followed in the wake of their idol, and, for the sake of the orchestra, like him utterly debased and barbarized the *cantilena* under pretext of truth in declamation. "In six years more," said I, "if this system be accepted, you will not have an artist left capable of singing an air by Handel or Mozart." "Well, what matter," was the quiet answer; "there has been enough of singing."

nate. "Fidelio" may, in some respect, be called a symphonic opera also, inasmuch as there, too, the instrumental part is more interesting than the vocal portion of the work; but who that knows "Fidelio" does not know it by the wonderful variety and spirit of Beethoven's orchestral devices? Or, to take a newer instance, on a first hearing of Herr Meyerbeer's operas, the ear, if it can receive nothing else, is cognizant of new and peculiar sonorities. I remember, as if it was only yesterday, the delicious impression first produced on me in 1836, by the scoring of the first and second acts of "Les Huguenots;" in such scenes as the one where *Raoul* is among the gallants peeping through the window at *Valentine;* or, in the interlude of the second act preluding the grand *aria* of *Marguerite de Valois*. No such felicities did my ears derive from "Tannhäuser." To me the instrumentation of that opera is singularly unpleasant—as too preposterous to be overlooked, too untrue to its own conditions to be accepted as a charming monster after its kind. From the pianoforte arrangement of the overture (in which, as I have said, the only two *motivi* deserving the name have been wrought), I had expected

striking effects of *crescendo*, *brio*, and, if a noisy orchestra, a rich one also.—The reverse is my impression. The sound is strident, ill-balanced, and wanting body. An awkward treatment of what may be called the tenor part of his band, leaves Herr Wagner often with only a heavy bass to support a squeaking treble poised high aloft. He seems to be fond of dividing his violins, as Weber and Mendelssohn did before him; but neither of these masters of the orchestra considered that by such division alone richness of tone was ensured. Such a full, brilliant, well nourished sound (to adopt the French phrase), as we find in Mendelssohn's *tenor* orchestra, even when his theme was the wildest—as in his "Hebriden" overture, his "A minor symphony," his "Walpurgis Chorus"—is no where managed by Herr Wagner. There is a brilliant violin figure at the close of the "Tannhaüser" overture,—more than once used by Cherubini,—which was intended to work up the composition with amazing fire. This, however, is so stifled by the disproportioned weight of the brass instruments that deliver the pilgrim tune in contrary *tempo*, as merely to produce that impression of strain which

accompanies zeal without result—how different from the brilliancy which Cherubini and Weber could get in similar situations, by means of one half the difficulty, when they tried for a like effect! Throughout the opera, in short, beyond a whimsical distribution of instruments, such as a group of flutes above the tenor voice,* or some lean stringed sound to harass, not support the bass,—I recollect nothing either effective or agreeable—but grim noise, or shrill noise, and abundance of what a wit with so happy a disrespect designated "broken crockery" effects—things easy enough to be produced by those whose audacity is equal to their eccentricity.

Of the fate of "Tannhaüser," at Dresden, on its first production, I have already spoken. It was not till the Revolution of 1848 came, that Dr.

* Here, again, I am well aware that I may have my own example of Meyerbeer cited against me, if only on account of the octave flute and bassoon in the "Pif, paf!" of "Les Huguenots," which gave occasion to Rossini's sarcastic compliment on that air, as "*musique champetre.*" But *baroque* as this combination may be considered, and unquestionably *is*, it rivets itself on the ear as effective also. Herr Wagner's best efforts in "Tannhaüser" are, to me, only *baroque*—the effect is wanting. In the more recent opera by him—"Lohengrin"—there are some brilliant orchestral pages.

Liszt began to interest himself for the composer, and devoted all his generous heart, soul, and spirit (all his ingenuity of enthusiastic paradox, and sophistry of brilliant wit, it must be added), to the production and recommendation of Herr Wagner's music; neither was it, till the composer had made himself a martyr, been brought out of prison (as it were), and defended as such, that Herr Wagner bethought himself of his system; to make room for which, he has modestly vituperated and condemned all former opera writers, as weak creatures who weakly conformed to the modes of the hour in which they wrote.

With the rehabilitation in question, however, and its possible influences on German music, I have happily here no concern, still less with Herr Wagner's self-glorification and destruction of old idols. But though I am exempted, by the nature of my task, from examining the old pretexts which in the case of Herr Wagner take the form of new paradoxes, a general remark on the subject must still be offered.

The cardinal fault in the new manner of composition (or decomposition) which has produced fruits so little satisfactory, may not solely arise

from Herr Wagner's perversity and poverty in special gifts combined. It may be a necessary consequence of the times we are living in, and of the ferment which is brewing around us. Being progressive, we are also expected to be universal. History must now be as amusing as a romance—romance must be as profound as a history. Poetry must run into the loops and knots and ties of didactic prose; prose must borrow all the garnitures of poetry. We have pictures painted, the subject and scope of which are not to be understood till we have read the book which describes them. We have books written which are not to be endured until they have been informed with a meaning, by aid of "pleasant pictures." So, in Music, the symphony, besides being a good symphony, must now express the anguish of the age, or of some age past. There must be story, inner meaning, mystical significance—intellectual tendency. To what interpretations of Beethoven's quartetts and sonatas have we not been exposed! Then, the opera must be a great poem—picture, drama, and symphony in one.—This extension of desire (not to call it a misuse of imagination) may be lamented, but it cannot be helped. The waters

are out—there is no calling them back. But, for the present, unless creative invention should develope itself in some form totally unexpected, such an increased and multiplied variety of requisitions is a hindrance rather than a help to the artist. If one ingredient elude his management, the composite work loses all symmetry, proportion, and power to charm sound taste. It is his comprehension of this difficult truth, and conformity to its conditions, which distinguish M. Meyerbeer, and which will so long maintain his grand operas on the stage. It is some sense of its force, and more unexpressed consciousness of his own incompleteness, which have driven Herr Wagner to the strange lengths of his unmusical proceedings, and which have tempted him, because he is unequal to the strain laid upon him, to break in pieces all the ancient and beloved things which have been worshipped, in place of adding to their number. That his countrymen, for the sake of some unmusical merits in his opera-books, are all, or any of them, willing to stand by and see the special graces of musical drama utterly tumbled into chaos, as so much obsolete rubbish, is a sight suggesting other

considerations—suggestions of a disorganization, if not disease, of artistic taste, which is not cheering. For the present, there seems not much chance of the ferment working itself clear; but it is, perhaps, better for the sake of Music, that it should at once boil, and bubble, and overflow the caldron, than struggle darkly beneath the surface, in a state of morbid compression, as was the case before the year 1848. The open proclamation of anarchy is less to be mistrusted than the discontents and plottings of secret conspiracy.

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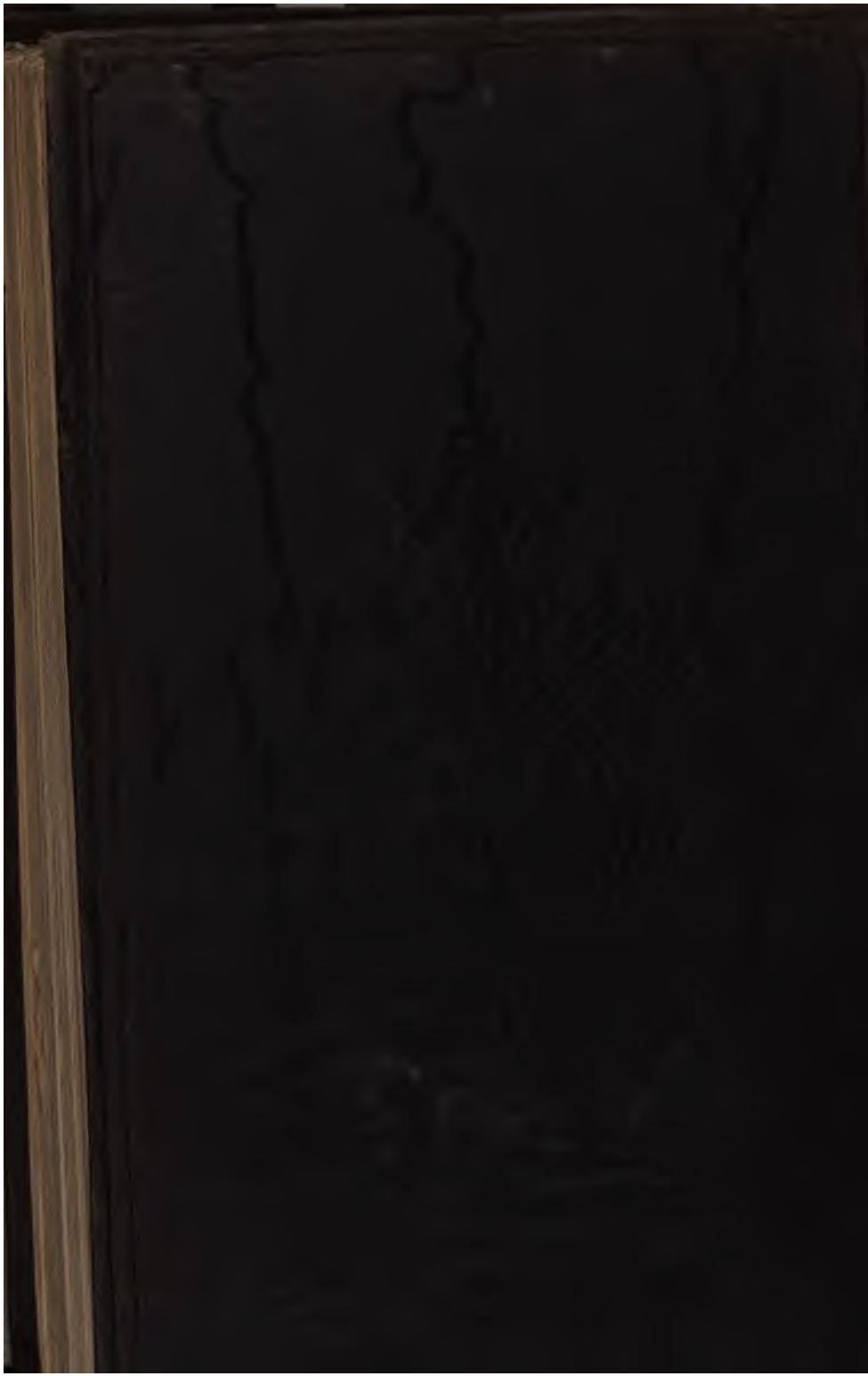
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